

ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS



XMAS
1902

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CHRISTMAS NUMBER



"Noel, Noel," the sacred strain
From heavenly voice and viol rings,
And lo! the children's window-pane
Is curtained by angelic wings.

NOEL.
DRAWN BY A. FORESTIER.

They enter, o'er the cot they lean;
Then the melodious vision flies,
Heard but by innocence, unseen
Save to the children's dreaming eyes.

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DR. LANCEREAUX,

Paris, Feb. 4, 1899.

Professeur à la Faculté de Médecine, Paris; Médecin honoraire des Hôpitaux; Président de l'Académie de Médecine.

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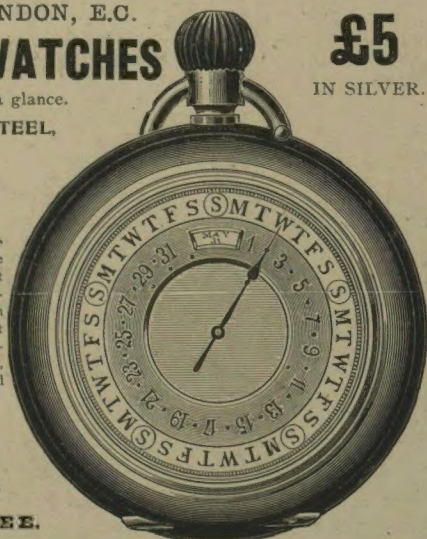
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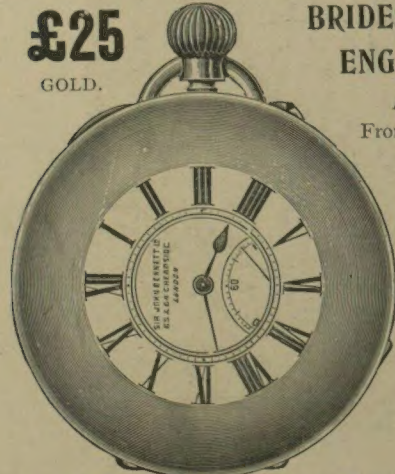
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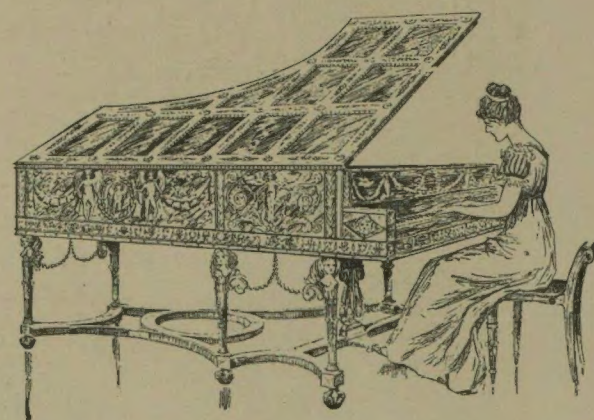
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Christmas Dinner Dainties.

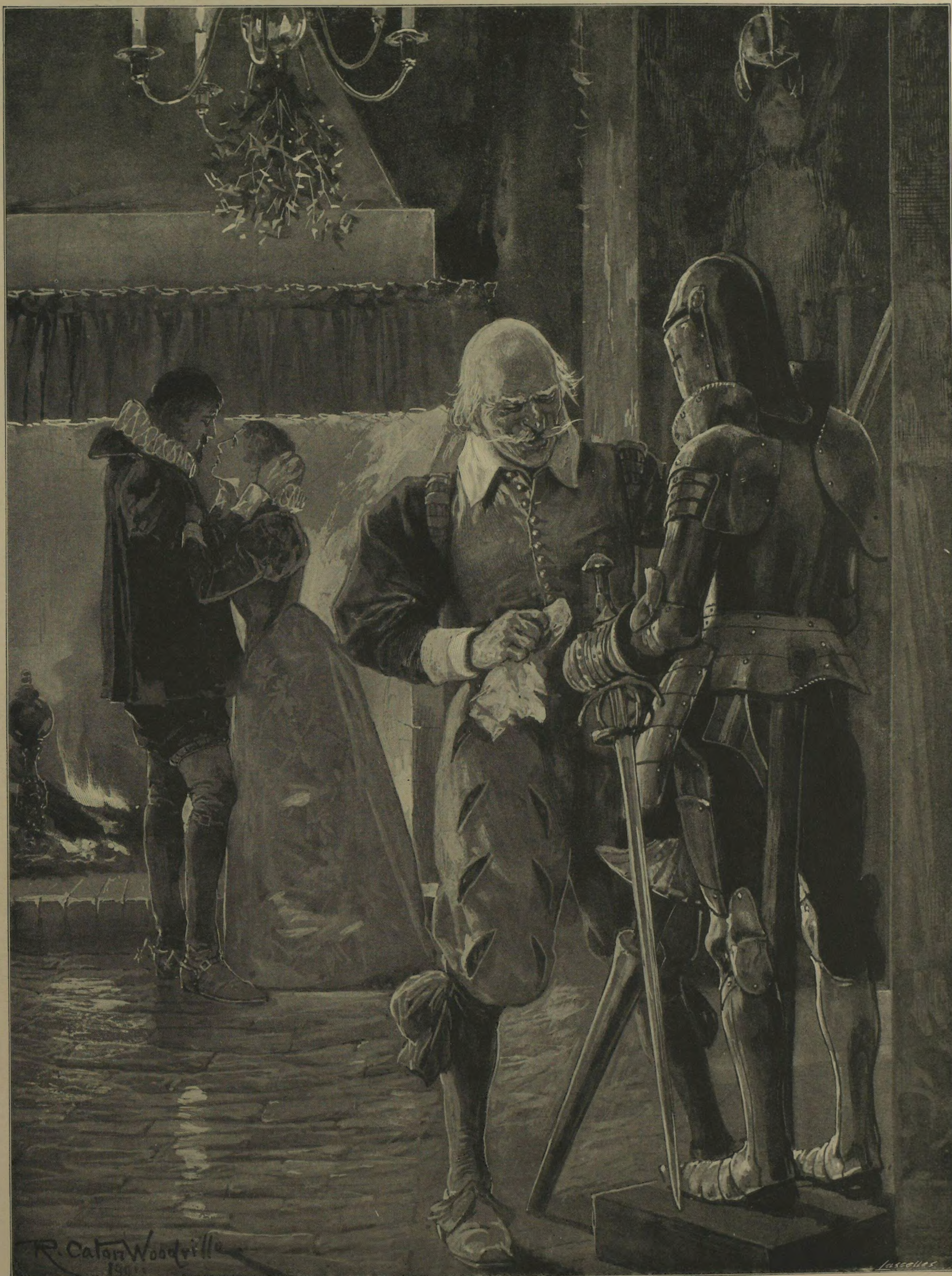
THE motto for every host when providing Christmas dinner should be "May good digestion wait on appetite!" It will, if in arranging the Xmas dinner, due regard is paid to seeing that the heavier fare is judiciously supplemented with light digestible dishes—such as a Brown & Polson Blancmange, Custard, or Jelly, made with their "Patent" Corn Flour.

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With stirring heart the old knight turns
From where the Yule-log gaily burns,
To view in deep reflective mood
The suit that many a shock withstood.
Let no rust the armour stain
That brings his battles back again!

WHAT HE SAW IN THE ARMOUR.

DRAWN BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.

'Tis the night of peace, and lo!
Yonder hangs the mistletoe;
So in that bright cuirass he reads,
Another tale than doughty deeds.
Ah, Marian! what can ail your mind,
That to a mirror you are blind?



Over the ice
In the stinging air
Chasing the ball,
Little we care
For fashion's device
Or the dainty fall
Of the robes we wear.

A STUDY IN CONTRAST:
EMANCIPATION.

DRAWN BY LUCIEN DAVIS, R.I.

Maidens we
Of the twentieth century,
Claiming our right
To everything ventury;
Frolicsome free,
Man's equal in might
At goal or at tee.



But though we affect
The sports of a man,
We dare not neglect
The cult of the fan;
And the sweep of a gown
Right deftly we plan,
With an eye to renown.

A STUDY IN CONTRAST:
CONVENTION.

DRAWN BY LUCIEN DAVIS, R.I.

Yes, we are the girls
Who swept the lagoon
In gyrating whirls,
The long afternoon.
We count it for wealth
That our sport brings the boon
Of beauty and health.



It cannot be this dainty three
Is at a loss to know
The proper place wherein to hang
The sacred mistletoe?

WHERE SHALL WE HANG THE MISTLETOE?

DRAWN BY MARCELLA WALKER.

But should they be, full easily
Their riddle may be read:
The fittest station for the bough
Is surely overhead!



A flash of lightning showed him the white robe, the wings, the golden aureole.

GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH.

By FLORA ANNIE STEEL.

Illustrated by R. CATON WOODVILLE.

"OH! MUMMY," said the Boy as his mother slipped a sort of nightgown over his trim little khaki uniform, "I shink it'sh shkittles!"

Boy's invariable dissent—picked up about the barracks of an Indian cantonment—was applied in this instance both to the angelic robe represented by the nightgown, and the angelic part the child was to play in it.

For it was Christmas Eve, and the vague desire for peace and goodwill which, even in these latter days, comes with Christmastide, had made the English aliens in the station devise a Tree for those still greater aliens—the Boer prisoners—who lived among them in the strange spider's web of barbed wire, which to the casual eye seemed so inefficient a prison for enemies who had defied capture so long, so bravely.

It was Boy's mother who had started the idea. She was one of those women, lovable utterly, not always reasonable, who find solace in dramatising their own sorrows. So when, two years before, her husband, commanding a native cavalry regiment still quartered in the station, had been ordered to Africa on Staff duty, she had remained on in the big house, sharing it with a friend, and continuing religiously to care for all things for which her absent soldier had cared—even for the regiment which was still so proud of its Colonel at the front.

It was a heartrending solace, indeed, to see the native officers and men, when they inquired for the latest news, salute Boy as solemnly as they would have saluted his father; and it pleased her to perceive that the only regard these warriors had for *her* was as guardian of their Sahib's honour and his only son; for the well-being of which things they were fiercely jealous.

To this woman, militant to the heart's core, yet sentimentally pitiful, it had seemed appropriate that Boy—son of the only fighting father in the station—should play the part of the "*Christ-kind*," the Bringer of good gifts at the Christmas-tree. There was no geographical or ethnological reason why this German custom should obtain among the Boers, but Boy's mother had recollections of schooldays abroad, and thought that her little son, with his aureole of red hair and grave baby face, so like the absent hero, would look sweet in the part.

"It isn't skittles at all, Boy," she said softly. "Remember what I told you about loving your enemies."

"I'd wather fight 'em like Daddy," replied Boy, drawing from its scabbard the miniature sword of strict regimental pattern which—it being a new toy—he had refused to lay aside even for angelic robings.

"But it is Christmas," persisted his mother. "Remember what I told you about it—about the angels, and the peace, and goodwill."

"I shink Chrishmus shkittles too."

"Quite right, youngster! It *is* skittles in India," put in a tall man, who, further down the verandah, was watching a woman's fingers busy themselves over church decorations.

His rather reckless expression changed as, stooping to select a brilliant branch of scarlet-fingered poinsettia from the confused heap of flowers and greenery at their feet, he handed it to his companion, and she looked up to thank him with her eyes.

Boy's mother—who had glanced towards them at the interrupting voice—paused over the angelic robe, uneasily silent.

"I wish I had something white, beside the roses," remarked the cross-maker a trifle hurriedly. "They don't look a bit Christmassy."

"Lilies?" suggested the man.

She shook her head. "Lilies don't suit the climate; there aren't any—*here*."

He stooped and spoke lower. "Yes! it's a God-forsaken spot all round—for *you*. But, look here! I saw a *dhatura* actually in blossom to-day—close to my bungalow. It's not unlike a lily—as white, anyhow—and sweeter. They use it in their temples—so why not in church? It doesn't do to be too particular—when you want anything."

She shook her head again. "It's poisonous—besides, it doesn't do—to leave the beaten path."

"Try!"

There was a pause; for the undercurrent, which had seemed to sweep each trivial word to another meaning, seemed suddenly to sweep this man and woman within touch—dangerous touch of each other.

"What *are* you two talking about?" asked Boy's mother, coming towards them. "What a lovely cross, Muriel! And why, please, should Christmas in India be skittles, Colonel Gould?"

He laughed. "How stern you look! I wish I could get that righteous indignation up for orderly room. I need it!"

"My husband never found the regiment difficult to manage," interrupted the wife of its absent commander jealously.

"Nor do I," retorted its present head, "but"—he paused, not caring to explain that he, an outsider sent but lately to drill a corps back to the discipline it had lost after her husband's departure, had naturally a very different task.

"Hullo, Boy!" he said, to change the subject, "that is a jolly little sword! Who gave it you?"

"Hirabul Khan gave it me," replied the child. "When I'm Colonel, he's going to be my risshildar, 'cos you shee he was my Daddy's orderly first, an' then Daddy made him—oh, lotsh of fings."

"He'll have to look out if he doesn't want to lose some things," said Colonel Gould sharply; then answering a vexed look of Boy's mother, continued: "He was a *protégé* of your husband's, I know—but he really has wind in his head. For his own sake it must be got out. I put him under arrest to-day, and told him squarely I'd have to block his promotion."

"What had he done?" She spoke quite fiercely.

"Cheek, as usual. It was over that escape from the camp. Haven't you heard? Viljeon, that cantankerous brute who gives so much trouble, managed to get out again last night. I wish it had been anyone else—for he's half mad and dangerous. I'm glad the General has ordered the search-party to shoot at sight if he offers resistance."

Boy, in his white robe, his toy sword in his hand still, nodded his red aureole sagely.

"The Tommies down at the camp told me. He's just an awful brute, Vile John is. He is goin' to kill all the little English children he meets, 'cos—'cos they killed his: but that's a damned lie."

The calm deliberation of the last was so evidently imitative that Boy's mother smiled, despite a sudden pain at her heart.

"They died, dear, and so you must be very sorry for him. Think how sad I should be if—" The thought produced a sudden caress, a sudden glisten in her grey eyes. "Now, Boy of mine, let me take that thing off. Then you must go and lie down and sleep, for you'll have to keep wide awake half the night."

"Take care of my shword, Mummy, please!" said Boy superbly, as, in unrobing, he shifted it from one hand to the other; "it's most dweadful sharp!"

"By George, it is," remarked Colonel Gould; "a trifle too sharp for safety."

"Is it?" said Boy's mother anxiously. "Hirabul ought not—"

"It wasn't Hira," interrupted Boy. "It was Kunder sharpened it, so as I could kill Vile John if I met him, like as my Daddy done over in Africa. Didn't you, Kunder?"

A figure squatting in a far corner rose and salaamed.

"The *Huzoor* speaks truth."

The speaker was an old man, slender, upright, unusually dark-skinned; this latter fact made his bare limbs look curiously youthful and lissom.

"Done it uncommonly well, too," assented Colonel Gould, feeling the edge. "Where did you learn the trick?"

"Your slave was once sword-sharpener by trade," was the submissive reply.

"Kunder'sh an awful clever chap," said Boy loquaciously. "He can make—oh! all sorts of fings as deads people—bows and stwangles, you know—can't you, Kunder?"

The man salaamed, with a watchful look at his other hearers.

"And," continued Boy, in vicarious boasting, "he can do all sorts of dweadful fings, too! He can steal people's purses when they're sleepin', an' make

dicky-birds tumble off bwanches, an' little boys like me wake never no more—can't you, Kunder?"

Submissiveness grew crafty. "This slave has certainly told such tales to the children-people."

"Looks scoundrel enough," remarked Colonel Gould carelessly. "Where did you pick him up?"

"Oh! he isn't my servant," replied Boy's mother. "He is Muriel's. I can't think why she keeps him."

The cross-maker rose and held her work at arm's length. "Does anyone really know why they do anything?" she asked. "Perhaps, as you say, he will steal my jewels some day—or murder me. But, as Boy says, he's awful clever, and one must be amused! Now I must go and put this up. Will you drive me to the church, Colonel Gould?"

"Better come in the victoria with me," said Boy's mother hastily; "it is going to rain." This other woman—this childless wife with an unspeakable husband—must be guarded from herself.

"I don't think so," put in the Colonel firmly. "Kunder! call my dogcart, and we can go round by my bungalow and pick the *dhatūra*."

Kunder, passing on his errand, looked up curiously at the last word.

Colonel Gould gave back the look. "Queer customer! Shouldn't wonder if he's a Thug—they use *dhatūra* poison to stupefy their victims, you know."

He spoke carelessly as they stood looking out at the bare patch of parched ground called by courtesy a garden. The lowering sky of an even purplish grey was so dark that the level lines of dust-laden *sirus* trees along the road showed light against it.

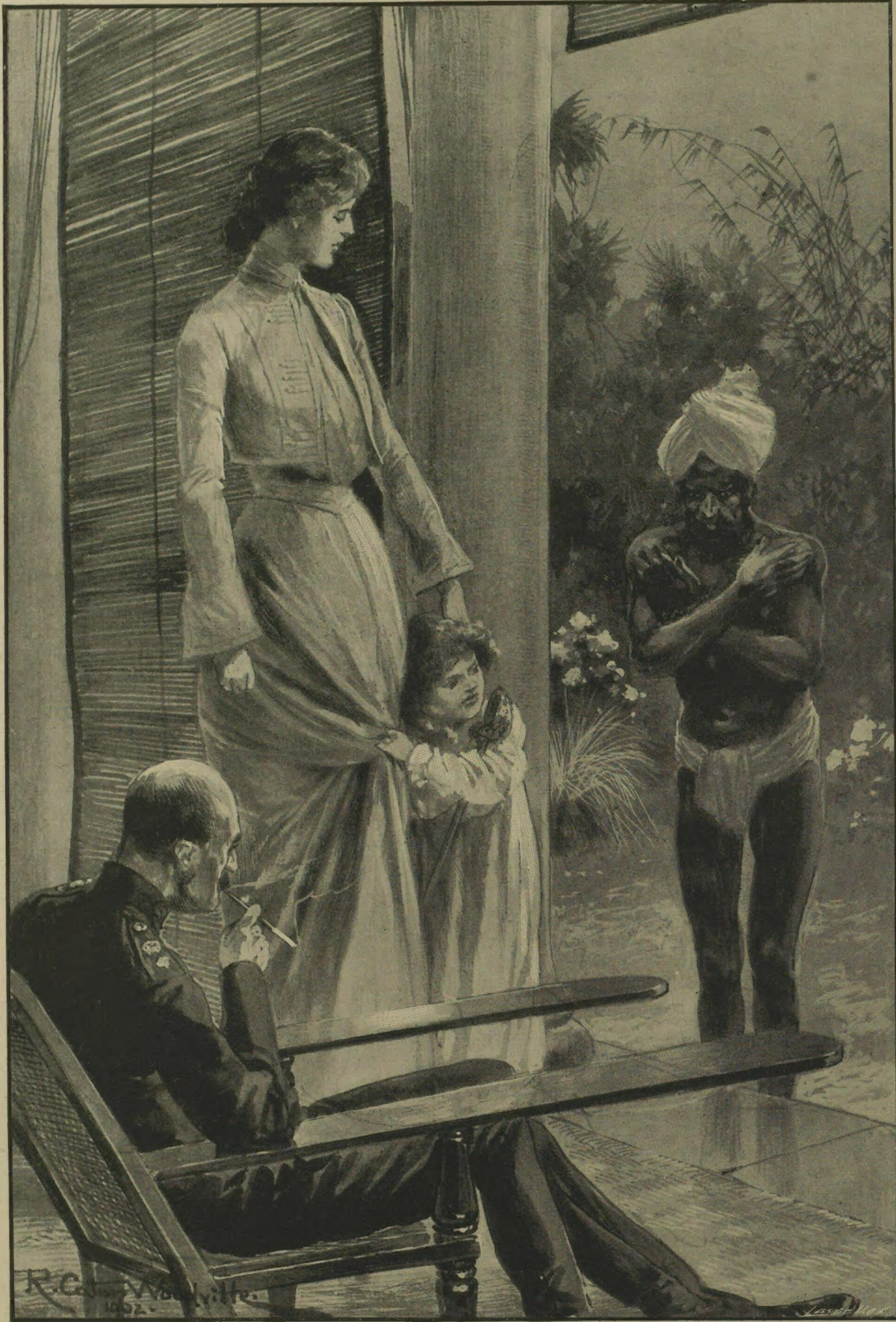
"I wish someone would stupefy me," said Muriel, with a sudden passion in her voice; to cover which she went on recklessly: "How I hate Christmas in India!—the sham of it—sham decorations—sham church—for it isn't real! The reality is outside among the poor folk in the fields and the towns, to whom Christmas is a day when *we* guzzle and *they* pay the piper!"

"My dear Muriel!"

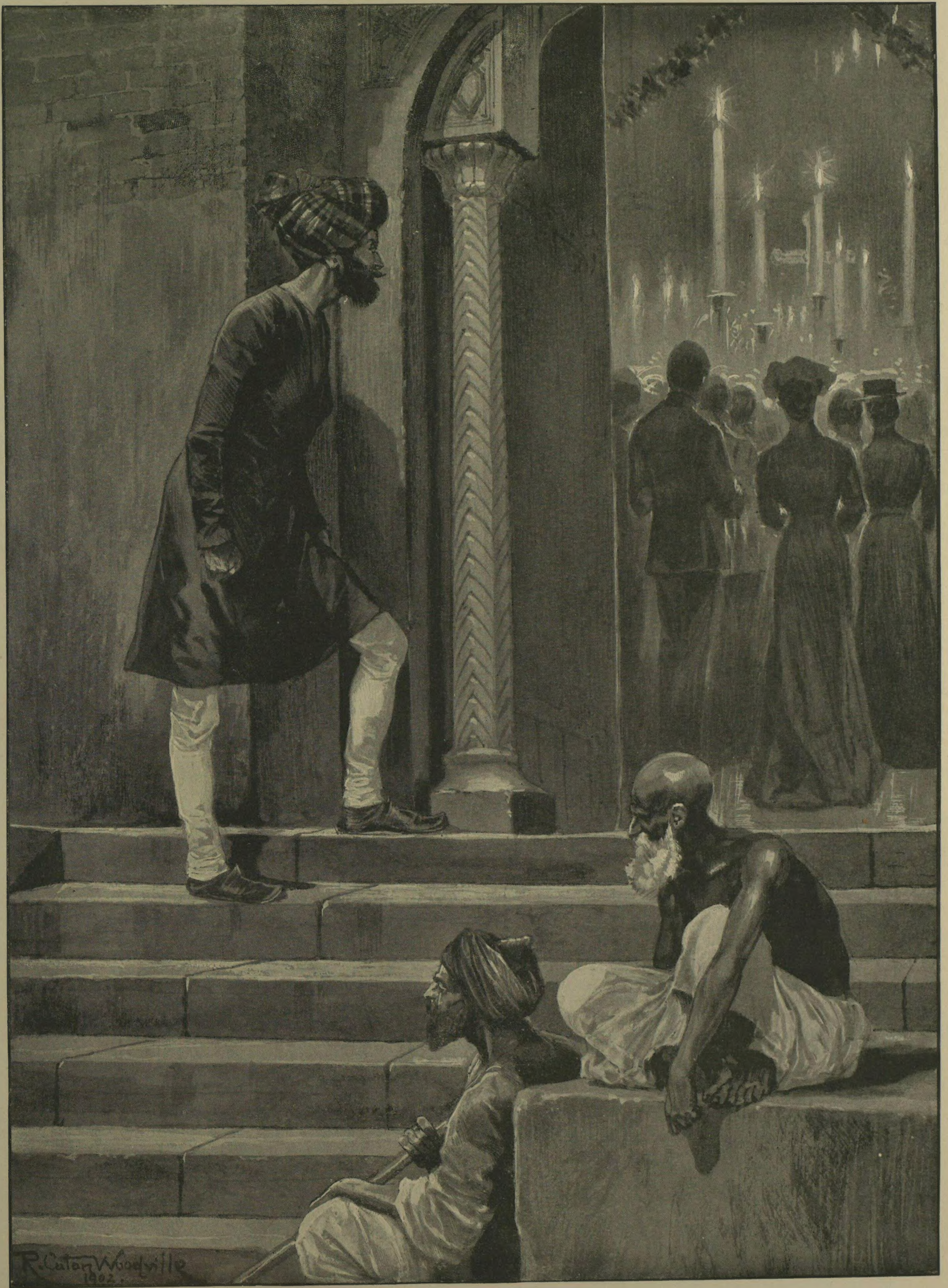
"It's true! Think of it! Peace and goodwill? Isn't the whole station at daggers-drawing because one lady said another wasn't the best-dressed woman in India? Isn't your regiment, Colonel, ready to murder you? Then that camp, right in the middle of us Christians, with how many prisoners eating their hearts out? And Vile John—as Boy has been taught to call him—half mad in thinking of his children who have died. Oh, I know it is all inevitable—but think, just think of him wandering about this Christmas Eve, liable to be shot at sight! There's a Santa Claus for you!"

Her voice had risen, her fingers had closed tremblingly on the sprig of poinsettia she had fastened in her breast. It showed against the white laces of her dress like a clutching scarlet hand.

Colonel Gould shrugged his shoulders uneasily. "Don't forget Kunder in the picture—Kunder with his 'fings as kills,' or, for the matter of that, *you* and *me*, and the rest of us! The Decalogue is in danger on Christmas Eve as always—perhaps more so."



"Your slave was once sword-sharpener by trade."



Hesitating at the open door he dare not enter.

"GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH," BY FLORA ANNIE STEEL.

"I don't believe it," exclaimed Boy's mother in sudden pitiful emotion. "Don't believe him, Muriel! Wait and see! Why, even that storm brewing"—as she spoke a shivering seam of lightning shot slanting across the purple pall behind the dusty trees—"only means the Christmas rains. How welcome they will be after this endless drought! They will perhaps save millions of lives—"

"A doubtful message of peace," put in the Colonel drily; "but hadn't we better start, or we shan't have time for the *dhatūra*."

"You haven't time," said Boy's mother sharply. "You must be back by eight, Muriel, for we have to be at the camp by nine. Ayah will bring Boy down ready dressed when we want him—so please don't be late."

This thing which she saw looming as plainly as she saw that storm in the sky, should not be if she could help it. They were too good—both the man and the woman—for that sort of ruin.

She shivered as she watched the dogcart drive off. Truly there were storms ahead! And that thought of Viljeon—childless, half distraught—wandering about, liable to be shot like a wild beast, made her fear for what might happen ere Christmas dawned.

The verandah darkened silently after she left it. Every now and again a puff of wind rattled the dry pods of the *sirus* trees, making them give out a faint crackle like that of a scaled viper coiled watchfully in a corner.

Kunder, in *his* corner, sat up keenly as a snake does. There was a louder crackle of a stealthy footstep.

"Is it well?" came a stealthy voice.

"If Fate wills," replied Kunder, sinking back again to sloth.

A stealthy hand reached out a tiny paper packet wound with unspun silk.

"The sleep-giver—from the Master—it is fresh and good."

"There is no need for sleep-giving," replied Kunder passively. "The *mem* is drunk with the love-philtre women crave. I know their ways"—he gave a little soft laugh. "She will not return to-night. So, at dawn, I and the jewels will be—with the Master—if Fate so wills."

"Why should She *not* will?"

Kunder laughed again. "Who knows what Fate *may* will?"

He looked out, when the stealthy footstep had gone, at the dusty trees that were growing ghostly in the twilight, and told himself again that none knew. Had *he* known when, as a lad, he fought against the Sahibs, that one day the death of a Sahib's five-year-old son would be to him as the death of his own child? Had *he* known when that nursling's red-gold curls—so like Boy's curls—lay confidingly on his breast, that one day he would be thief—perhaps murderer?

No! it was as Fate willed. He was, as ever, in Her hands to-night.

Another footstep! not stealthy this time, but hurried even in its measured military rhythm.

It was Hirabul Khan, the disgraced native officer, seeking an appeal to Colonel Gould before the limitations of an open arrest made it necessary for him to return to his quarters.

"Yea, he was here!" replied Kunder cynically. "He is ever here—after the *mem*! Where hides the doe thither comes the buck!"

Hirabul twirled his moustache fiercely. "Keep thy tongue off thy betters, scum of the bazaars, or I break thy every bone. I give thee womenkind in general—but *this* one is different. Whither hath he gone?—for I must see him."

"No need," retorted Kunder spitefully. "Thy pottage is cooked already. He told the *mem* so but now. 'No promotion,' said he—I know their speech. And she—"

"Base-born!—and she?"

"She laughed, as I do—scum of the bazaars! Ha, ha!" A devilish malignity had seized on him; he chuckled even while Hirabul shook him like a rat.

"Liar! Cur! Whither hath he gone?"

"To the church—with the *mem*! Thou wilt see! 'No promotion,' said he; and she—"

With a curse Hirabul flung the chuckler from him, and strode away into the growing darkness.

The church stood—after the manner of Indian churches—in a garden, and on the wide sweep of gravel round it carriages were awaiting the owners, who were busy within. The Colonel's dogcart was among them. So he was there, sure enough.

Hirabul Khan, hesitating at the open door he dare not enter, could see straight along the aisle to the altar; could see the cross of poinsettia and white roses upon the latter, the text above it—

"UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN."

Unmeaning as it all was to him, he stood looking at it dreamily, until suddenly from the unseen transept the Christmas hymn began, and those of the decorators who were not remaining for choir practice came trooping down the aisle. Then he retreated hastily to where the Colonel's dogcart stood, that being his best chance of the interview which, if humble apology might avail, would mean much to his pride.

So he waited, watching with uncomprehending eyes, listening with uncomprehensive ears—

"Oh! come all ye faithful,

Joyful and triumphant,

Oh! come ye, oh! come ye to Bethlehem."

Suddenly, on those distant voices, the sound of nearer ones became audible. He stepped back a pace or two, and peered through the thicket of rose and pomegranate.

The scum of the bazaars had spoken truth, then! That man and woman standing so close to each other in the scented twilight were the new Colonel, the real Colonel's wife! What infamy! He set his teeth and listened; though this was to him as incomprehensible as the call to peace and goodwill had been.

"For God's sake, have pity on her!" Boy's mother's voice was full of tears. "I heard you settle it. But if you two pick that *dhatūra* to-night—the last thing after the Tree, so that it may not wither! Oh, yes, I heard, Colonel Gould—"

"You *did* hear. I don't deny it. My dear, kind lady—think! If it is not to-night—it *must* be soon. This life is killing her—it is wiser, kinder, to end the struggle now—"

"No, no, give her time. It is in your power to do this, for she loves you. Remember it is Christmas; you might, at least—"

"The better the day! No; Christmas must take care of itself—if *it* can! I mean to take her away and care for her—if *I* can. But thanks, all the same. I shall never forget your kindness."

In the semi-darkness the listener could see the man stoop and kiss the hand laid on his arm.

The next instant Colonel Gould was turning savagely on the figure which had thrust itself on to the path.

"What the devil are you doing here, Sir? You are under arrest, and should be in quarters."

"It was only open arrest, Sir, and the time—" Hirabul's tone matched the mutiny in his heart, and the Colonel broke in on it roughly—

"Consider it close arrest now. Go back and report yourself at once—and, by Heaven! if you say another word I'll have you court-martialled. Go!"

A wild surge of impotent rage kept Hirabul Khan speechless, and ere he recovered himself the Colonel was driving off—the Colonel and a woman!

"Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation."

He turned and shook his fist at the church, then, plunging recklessly through the garden, sought silence and solitude. He needed calm before he could even begin his revenge.

There was no doubt about the coming of the rains now. More than one heavy, curiously round drop fell on the dust through which he strode; but all was still—very still as yet.

By-and-by twinkling carriage lights, like fireflies, began to sparkle among the straight row of trees leading to the prison camp.

Yet the rain kept off, and it had not even begun to fall when the ayah's twinkling light roused Boy for his robing. But half awake, the child grew fractious, calling all things "shkittles," save the killing of Viljeon, who, he asserted, was hiding in the garden. To all of which Ayah, awaiting the carriage, agreed, until her charge, seated on his little bed, grew drowsy once more, and she stole off for a last pull at her forbidden pipe.

But Kunder's light went on twinkling in the further room, where he was conscientiously finishing his old domestic duties, and preparing for new ones.

So after a time the carriage arrived, bringing with it a smell of damp dust.

"Hurry up, woman!" called the coachman. "It has begun down the road like the storm of God. Bring the child; it were best he was soon in safety."

Bring the child! How? When Boy, with his little pretence wings sewn on to his nightgown behind, his little sword that was not all pretence, was not to be found!

The twinkling lights—Kunder's among them—were all over the garden, accompanied by endearments, threats, promises.

"Shiv-jee save him!" muttered Kunder, as suddenly the rain began to fall in torrents, quenching his light, washing him from head to foot. The child with the red-gold curls of his race might well drown on a night like this!

The Colonel felt the same fear, as, waiting at the camp-gate to pass the child in, he heard the news first; then, with a brief order that the boy's mother was only to be told that the carriage had been unable to return, owing to the violent storm, and that therefore the gift-giving must go on without the little giver, started to join the search.

Hirabul also, who, waiting his opportunity for revenge, had dogged the Colonel's footsteps all that evening, heard the tale as he skulked in the crowd, put up his revolver, and with a sob at the thought of his far-away Sahib, unconscious of his wife's treachery or his son's danger, set himself another task.

So the rain fell, and the wayfarers, keeping by the flare of incessant lightning to the raised roads, said to each other, "This is the deluge of God! Repent while there is time!"

"What a terrific noise it makes on this iron roof," said Boy's mother, when the gift-giving was nearly over. "I'm glad Boy didn't come—he might have been frightened . . ."

Was he frightened out in the dark alone? He had been. Not at first, however, when, half asleep, it had been almost a game to slip into the garden to find and kill Viljeon, and so, cunningly, into the belt of jungle adjoining it. He was not even frightened when, stumbling over the rough ground and his long white robe, he began to tire and tried to go back. It was not until the lightning which heralded the bursting of the rain-cloud turned the wilderness around him into black and white shadows that his courage left him, and he started to run blindly, too terrified to think, still too brave to scream.

But he was not frightened now. He was fast asleep, cuddled warmly on a big, broad breast against a big brown beard.

For that quaint little figure, sword in hand and with its ridiculous fluttering wings, had almost in its first flight run full tilt against a man who was crouching to leeward of a big tuft of tiger-grass—a man whose head was buried in his crossed arms, but who sprang to his feet with a curse at the unmistakable touch of humanity; then, as a flash of lightning showed him the white robe, the wings, the golden aureole of hair, fell back faltering.

"God in Heaven!" he muttered in a foreign tongue. "What dost Thou here?"

Boy needed no question as to his wants. "Oh, please!" he panted, "take me home. I wanted to kill Vile John with the sword as Kunder sharpened; but now I'd wather, please, give the Chrishmus fings—the peace, you know, an' all that—please, Sir. I weally would wather——"

A sudden smile, half bitter, came to the man's bewildered face. "You wanted to kill Vile John," he said in English—"Why?"

"Oh, I don't know—but I don't want to now. I'd wather bring the peace."

And then silently the rain had begun—not rain such as Christmas usually brings in India, but the downpour as from a bucket which comes at times after long drought—rain before which nothing can stand, which seems to wash the world and the men in it from all things save a desire for shelter.

"God in Heaven!" exclaimed the man, reverting to his own tongue. "We shall be drowned if we stop here. Come, little rat! Let us find a spot where we can keep dry."

A difficult job even for this man—Viljeon, prince of veldt roamers—to whom this country with its rapidly filling watercourses, its wide stretches of flood-land, was almost familiar. Seen, indeed, by the rapid shimmer of the lightning as he steered his way, the instinct of a pioneer waking in him at every step, he could scarce believe he was not mastering an African drift.

For Kunder, who had abandoned jewels in the search for gold curls, had happened in the dark upon Hirabul Khan, who in his turn was desperately seeking aid for a disabled man whose shouts for help he had answered, unwitting who gave them.

And if it *was* the Colonel, explained Hirabul, half apologetically, as they made their way back together to give the help—well! a man might be disloyal over women—who were the devil—yea! even to a real hero like the absent Sahib, and yet not deserve to drown like a rat in a drain; and as for the other question, *that* stood over for settlement.

Whereupon Kunder had asked what treacherous woman had an absent hero, and had thereupon fallen into jeers over Hirabul's mistake. Was he a fool not to know it was the other *mem* who lived in the house? As for Boy's mother, was she not palpably a *pudmuni*, with no thought save for husband and son?

In consequence of which explanation a new and remorseful respect had come to Hirabul's helping of the Colonel, so that when the latter was at last in comparative safety in the cattle-shed, he, too, found food for thought as he also sat waiting for daylight, hoping against hope for Boy and Boy's mother.

So the grey dawn found him dozing at the door. But he started to his feet at an exclamation from Kunder, who was standing outside; and then across



"You will find the Child lying in the manger."

And the child cuddled close to his breast, wrapped for shelter in his coat? Who was this child which he held as if it had been his own—the child with its travesty of wings, its travesty of a sword?

Half bewildered as he was, the humour, the pathos of the strange chance made his heart softer, and his eyes grew keener, not only for himself, but for his charge as the danger increased minute by minute.

At first, mixed with his desire for present shelter had been that of future escape for himself. But by degrees the thought of the child came uppermost. Safety for it lay on different lines from safety to a strong man untrammelled; and the instinct of the veldtsman told him that the former was on the higher ground near the cantonment—near the prison he had left!

So, through the incessant rain he threaded his way, wading waist-deep at times, till, on a rising bit of land the lightning showed him a ruined mud hovel. It might serve for shelter and rest for the time; if the flood rose to it he could but go on.

It was a sort of cattle-shed he found; a rude trough of mud ran round it, and in one corner was a pile of straw. He drew the driest of this from beneath the leaking roof, and, placing it in the trough, laid the still sleeping child upon it. It was better so than in his damp coat. Then, creeping to the doorway, he sat down to think and watch—alone.

Not quite so much alone, however, as the darkness of the night which followed on the sudden cessation of rain led him to believe; for not two hundred yards away, in another cattle-shed on this Government grazing-ground, three other refugees were also awaiting the dawn.

a stretch of shallowing water he saw another ruined cattle-shed, and at the doorway a tall, broad man, with a big brown beard.

"Viljeon!" he exclaimed under his breath.

"To be shot at sight," mumbled Hirabul, but half awake, as he reached round aimlessly for a rifle.

"Fool!" cavilled Kunder, all unwitting of the revolver in Hirabul's belt, "thou art not safe with things that kill, so 'tis well thou hast none. See! he beckons to us. Let us go to him. The rain hath washed evil from us all!"

They helped the Colonel, who could scarce believe his senses, to hobble across, while Viljeon stood guarding the door with a still stern look on his face.

"You will find the Child lying in the manger," he said; "bring your offerings—I have brought mine."

But only three wise men went down to cantonments that Christmas morning, bringing the child with them; for Kunder, wiser, perhaps, or less wise, felt that his new virtue was better away from the proximity of the jewels he had left tied up ready in a bundle, so, seizing his opportunity, he slipped like a water-snake into the tangle of floods and was seen no more.

"And after all," said Boy's mother softly, "Christmas *did* take care of itself!"

"Yes!" answered the Colonel quietly. "We all brought our offerings—gold and frankincense and myrrh."

THE END.



Without there, watchman, wind your horn!
What, warder, let the drawbridge down!
Ho! servitors, the hall adorn
To greet the guests of high renown;

AN OLD-TIME CHRISTMAS WELCOME:
IN THE DARK AGES.

DRAWN BY A. FORSTIER.

And let the flambeaux bravely flare
A welcome worthy of the time,
The house, and all who gather there
To keep Noël with feast and mime.



Oh, irony that in an age of light
Condemns a household to Cimmerian night,
And bids them greet their guests (ah, triple woe!)
With candles and the fairy lamps' faint glow!

A MODERN CHRISTMAS WELCOME:
THE ELECTRIC LIGHT THAT FAILED.

DRAWN BY A. FORESTIER.

Why this mischance? Can gentle science give
No aid, and bid the lamps again to live?
Nay, for Jack Frost arrested in its flow
The stream that drives the family dynamo.



Would you keep Yule in the old way,
Make it a rule once every day
The Clerk of the Weather to beg, soft and low—
“At Christmas pray mantle the landscape in snow.”

AN OLD-FASHIONED CHRISTMAS.

DRAWN BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.

Should he comply (wonder untold!)
Forth you must hie, scorning the cold,
And tracking the forest and spurning the drifts,
Lay axe to the fir that will blossom with gifts.



THE LUCK OF THE LEURA.

By Mrs. CAMPBELL PRAED.

ILLUSTRATED BY A. FORESTIER.

I.

THREE or four Leura squatters—old Berris of Teelbar with his precocious son and the Targinie bachelors—were spending Christmas with Forbes Vallis of Kooroon and his bride. It was their first sight of the bride, and they were taken aback by her beauty and charm. This love match had started in England two years back, just after that young æsthete Vallis left Oxford—poorly equipped, thought the Leura folk, for roughing it in the bush. There had been difficulties about the engagement. However, when Brenda came of age she went out to Australia and married her lover in Sydney, her mother's second marriage, at forty, having probably hastened matters. Vallis's station on the Leura was a good way "out back." But he had built a weather-board cottage—zinc-roofed, with a verandah, and a kitchen hut, protected by bough-shades; had set up a Chinese cook and a Chinese gardener, and had, on the whole, made things comfortable. Brenda, being of an adventurous and emotional disposition, was enchanted with her new home. The Leura country is mostly enormous plains—deserts in a drought, but blossoming in rains—with rocky hummocks dotted about and the usual timber of those parts—gidia, sandalwood, and the eternal gum. It was looking splendid just now after a succession of good seasons and late November rains. The cattle were rolling in fat, and the squatters were in high feather. Prime bullocks fetched as high as seven pounds a head, and wool had risen. Old Berris's gruesome allusions to previous spells of drought that had ruined many a station-holder on the Leura were received with good-humoured derision by host and hostess. Forbes Vallis and his wife had already made plans for retiring on a fortune, within ten years, to a princely villa overlooking Sydney Harbour, when Forbes would go in for politics, and Brenda qualify as the helpmeet of a future Premier.

"Well," said Mr. Berris portentously, pausing in his attack upon the pinion of a turkey. "Thirty years' hard work at Teelbar hasn't put me clear of the Bank yet. Fortunes aren't made so easily on the Leura, Mrs. Vallis—or anywhere else in Australia, unless you go fossicking and happen to strike payable gold."

The new husband and wife exchanged glances and smiles.

"Oh, but that's just it," said Brenda excitedly. "Mr. Berris, do you know what Forbes calls me? Tell him, dear!"

"The Luck of the Leura," said Forbes. "And I've christened our mine after her. I am sure none of you fellows will jump our claim."

"I found it. It was I who picked up the nugget," went on Brenda; "at least—not a nugget exactly, but a bit of ore with yellow streaks through it. Forbes and I were riding over the dividing range between us and Teelbar, and we were afraid of an old German prowling round—the Lone Fossicker, Forbes called him."

The Targinie men laughed. "No fear. He's gone prospecting up the Billabong."

"We thought he might come back, so Forbes set the blackboys to work digging a big pit; and we buried all the specimens we could get together—there were plenty—and laid gum saplings over them and covered them with earth. In the meantime we've sent the bit of ore to be assayed, and are expecting the mailman to bring us news of the result."

"I can tell it you before he comes," said Mr. Berris grimly. "Most of us have had a try up those gullies in the range. You needn't be afraid of the Lone Fossicker, Mrs. Vallis. He knows what he is about. Your gold is iron pyrites" (he called it "iron pirates") "and nothing else."

Brenda did not know anything about "iron pirates," but Mr. Berris's manner was disheartening. The Targinie men began to relate mining experiences concerning different kinds of ore and mistakes of assayers.

"There's kaolin now—looks like white chalk and gives twenty ounces to the ton. And there's the other sort—brown, with oxide of iron. I know a chap that sent some to the Sydney Mint to be tested, and had the tailings sent back as useless. Well, he tried the chlorine process, and they got six ounces from those tailings. I tell you, chlorine will get out gold that the old amalgam process won't touch."

"Jakes, the Government geologist, advises people to go back to their old mines and test again," said the other Targinie man.

"All right!" said Mr. Berris. "But here, you've got to oxidise the iron before it will give you your gold. And there's no process discovered yet that will extract gold from 'iron pirates.'"

Ah Sin glided in, bearing the plum-pudding set in brandy flames, and Ah Fat, the gardener, followed with more brandy sauce and the plates. It was very hot, and ice would have been more appropriate than burnt brandy, had ice been procurable. But it was Christmas, and the furthest stockman in the wilds does homage to national sentiment in the matter of plum-pudding. Mosquitoes had begun to buzz, flying ants were dropping their wings on the cloth, and all manner of insects swarmed about the kerosene hanging-lamp which Brenda had garlanded with mistletoe. She had made the table pretty, too, with red berries out of the bush and lilies from the lagoon, which had not been dry for three years. Presently, the health of the bride and bridegroom was drunk in champagne, got up at vast expense and cooled by having stood for twenty-four hours in the water-bag. After dinner came a smoke and lounge in the verandah, while the Chinamen cleared the table. Darkness had fallen, and the Southern Cross was mounting the heavens. Down in the plains, the blacks' fires twinkled, and there floated up the sound of a corroboree tune. Brenda went to the piano in the parlour and sang "Home, Sweet

Home," in which the bushmen joined, at first, a little shamefacedly. But they gave a vigorous chorus when the Berris boy burst into a stockman's song to the air of "Widow Dunn"—

Then it's early in the morning, our breakfast being done,
We go to get our cattle from outside;
Our cosy blankets leaving, we start out on the run,
And we do not care a hang what may betide.
Are you ready? Take them steady,
And be sure you don't let any get away;
And do not leave behind any you may find,
For I want to have a good full camp to-day.

And so on to the last verse, sung by the men with enthusiastic intention—

A man, though in the bush he's stuck, can lead a pleasant life,
For he has generally lots of work to do;
And if he has the luck to get a clever little wife
You'll find that he can make some money too.
Though whisky's heady, he'll keep steady,
And be always where there's business to be done.
And, to prove the moral true, I'll sing it now to you,
That two heads are better far than one.

But jokes and laughter were hushed when Brenda gave them an Old English Carol. Her pure sweet voice suited well the quaint words—

He neither shall be clothed in purple nor in pall,
But in the fair white linen that usen babies all.
He neither shall be rocked in silver nor in gold,
But in a wooden manger that resteth on the mould.

All joined in the last verse—

Then be ye glad, good people, this night of all the year,
And light ye up your candles; His star it shineth near.
And all in earth and heaven, our Christmas Carol sing,
Goodwill and Peace and Glory! And all the bells shall ring.

There were no roystering ditties after that; and before long, the bushmen were riding in the track of the moon across the plain, and husband and wife were left alone.

Brenda closed the piano and straightened the parlour in a feminine way that pleased Forbes. He went up to her, and putting his hands on her shoulders turned her to him. The two gazed at each other with love-lit eyes. "My wife, how beautiful you are!"

She laughed delightedly, throwing back her golden head and showing the exquisite lines of chin and throat.

"Ah, you have me to look at now instead of your little marble Ariadne. I like you to think me beautiful, Forbes—I never want to seem beautiful to anyone else, for I know that beauty is what you care for most in the world."

He held her at arm's length, worshipping her.

"How you understand me! You always told me that I should have been a poet, or a painter, or a sculptor. But even a bushman can adore beauty when he has his ideal always before him."

"So I am your ideal of beauty! But if I had been a plain woman, Forbes, you wouldn't have married me?"

There was an anxious note in her voice. He laughed.

"I can't imagine you anything but what you are, Brenda. Frankly, I couldn't have fallen in love with an ugly woman. It's temperament in me. I have always shrunk from deformity, sickness, decay—all the hideous possibilities of life. We agree in that, dearest?"

"Yes," she answered. "We are both pagan in our worship of beauty, and that's why I delight in this wild, fascinating bush. But—oh, Forbes, a ghastly terror came over me to-day when Mr. Berris was telling us about those years of drought, and how the women suffered in them and grew old before their time; and I remembered that Mrs. Malcolm at the station where we stopped a night, and I thought, could I possibly ever grow like her—worn, battered, with dried-up, red eyes, and, oh, such a dreadful skin!—and such hands!"

"Mrs. Malcolm is a consequence of drought on top of a big debt, with sandy blight, dengue fever, no servants, and all other horrors of the Never-Never on top of that," said Forbes. "But you shall not run the risk of losing health and good looks in the bush, darling. With any sort of luck we shall have cleared out in a few years' time, and be enjoying life down south."

"Oh, I hope so, Forbes. I couldn't bear to lose my looks. I'd rather die while I was still lovely in your eyes than live to become an object of disgust to you. And I should know it, however much you tried to hide your feelings. I should know it, and I should not blame you, because I myself have felt the same. You never saw poor Aunt Hermione? Well, she had smallpox, and her eyes were affected, and her face—oh, I hate to think of it! When I was a schoolgirl I used to adore her. And the horrible thing was that, after loving her so, I got almost to loathe her. I did everything I could to avoid seeing her. I used to pray that I might die rather than get like Aunt Hermione. So you see I couldn't blame you for being tired of me if I grew old and repulsive."

Brenda wrung her hands nervously. She seemed strangely moved. He caressed and soothed her with assurances that they would grow old together and protestations of lasting devotion. She only shook her head.

"All the same, remember what I say. If ever I am distasteful to you, and you love someone else better, I shall destroy myself."

"My dearest, what a morbid idea!"

"Don't laugh. I mean it. I couldn't endure to outlive the look you are giving me now."

He remonstrated more earnestly.

"Well, well," she said, "I'll try not to think of it; and if at forty I am as pretty as mother, I shan't need to be afraid. Forbes, I wish the mailman would come," she added impetuously, changing the subject, "I am anxious to know how things have gone with mother."

"He's taking a Christmas spree at the shanty," said Forbes. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, his ears caught by a peculiar "Coo-ee," "I believe that's him now." Presently they were in the back verandah, welcoming the postman, who got down from behind a hillock of leather mailbags and hitched his horse to the palings.

"Merry Christmas to you, McGrath!" said Forbes. "Just in time for a tuck in before Ah Sin goes to bed. Hand us over the bag. And here's a nobbler for you to drink the missus's health in."

"Sorry to be late, Ma'am," apologised the postman; "but the river was a sight over my saddle flaps. No fear of a drought this year, boss. My word! you Leura squatters are having fine times of it. I heard about your last sale. Good luck and ten thousand a year, and a merry Christmas to you! And the same to you, Ma'am. And here's your health, Mrs. Vallis."

The mailman tossed off his glass of grog and went up to the kitchen, where, in the doorway, Ah Sin and Ah Fat showed welcoming yellow faces. As a fact, Ah Sin and Ah Fat were expecting by McGrath a little packet which might be taken for garden-seeds, but were in reality, innocent-looking brown pellets of opium charcoal. Brenda carried the mail-bag into the parlour, where Forbes cut the string, which was knotted under a big red Government seal. He tumbled out the letters and papers on the table.

Brenda eagerly seized hers, which bore English stamps, and Forbes pounced upon a long blue envelope containing the report of the Government assayer. He had not the heart to interrupt Brenda, who was devouring her letter, leaning over the table with the light of the lamp upon her golden hair.

At last he said, "Brenda!"

She looked up.

"Darling"—his voice shook a little—"you're the Luck of the Leura always, but the other luck has failed. Old Berris was right. It's iron pyrites—and worth nothing."

Brenda's great-blue eyes, which had been bright as stars, dulled as she stared at him in dismay.

"Oh, Forbes!" she cried. "Oh, I am so sorry!" And then her face brightened, and a delicious wave of colour rose in her cheeks. "But, Forbes, I do feel so thankful. Mother is quite well, and she has a baby daughter. They are going to call her Aurea."

II.

It was Christmas again on the Leura twenty years after. But the country had changed: the great plains were now parched and barren, overgrown only with the thorny spinnifex. The water-holes were dry, and the river a mere trickle between banks of sand. Most of the original squatters had gone away ruined, but among the old names there still remained Berris of Teelbar—old Berris's son had succeeded him—and Vallis of Kooroon.

Yet, though Forbes Vallis was nominally master, it was the Bank of Leichardt's Land which really owned his station.

In these twenty years there had been long spells of drought, causing cattle to die by thousands, and sheep by tens of thousands. Prices had gone down. There had been strikes among the shearers and grim war between Unionists and Pastoralists. Times were bad—as bad as they could be.

Twenty summers of scorching heat and plagues of insects, of sandy blight, Belyando, dengue fever—all the miseries falling to the lot of those who dwell in the back blocks. Brenda Vallis's peach bloom had vanished, leaving a skin tanned and coarsened by exposure, during days when she had helped her husband on the run or, shielded only by a bough-shade, had stood over the washing-tubs outside, or in front of the fireplace, cooking station meals. For with the first pinch of misfortune Ah Sin had departed; Ah Fat followed him, and Brenda had suffered greatly for want of vegetables.

Fever had withered her limbs and dug furrows in her face. The golden hair had grown grey and scanty, and the beautiful blue eyes contracted and watery from sandy blight, the lashes gone from use of sulphate of zinc, and the lids reddened—were almost sightless, and usually hidden beneath a green shade.

At forty, Brenda was a wreck, but Forbes, though careworn, was still handsome and distinguished. He had greater change of scene and occupation than Brenda, and less of the sordid household grind. Bush-life does not tell so hardly upon a man as upon a woman.

Fortunately, perhaps, Brenda had no children; yet sometimes she fancied that had a daughter been born to them something poetic might have come into the dreary commonplace round to replace her romantic passion for her husband, which of late seemed to have turned to bitterness.

Brenda fretted and pined. She could not live without an emotion. Forbes was no longer demonstrative of his affection, and so Brenda told herself that because she had ceased to be attractive he had ceased to care for her. Hitherto there had been no young woman on the Leura whom he could prefer to her. But now the rival had, she believed, appeared, and—horrible thought—in the person of her half-sister. Aurea, the babe grown to womanhood and left an orphan, had, six months before, come out on a visit to her relatives in Australia. Forbes brought her up from the coast. When they arrived, he led her into the darkened room where poor Brenda sat, her eyes bandaged with a cloth soaked in opium to relieve the pain.

She took off her bandage to look at Aurea, and as her unaccustomed eyes travelled painfully, they met in a mirror her own image and that of the girl. Brenda beheld herself as she now was, and as she had been when Forbes married her. He, too, was reflected in the glass, his gaze fixed on Aurea. Not for a long time had Brenda seen that look upon his face—the dear look of admiration. She gave a little cry. Forbes exclaimed: "You see it, too, my poor Brenda! Aurea is exactly what you were at her age. It isn't often that a man finds his ideal of beauty personified twice in a lifetime— But what is the matter, old woman?"

Brenda tottered, and, stretching out her arms helplessly, sank back in her chair.

Often after that, Brenda felt a knife in her heart when Forbes turned from Aurea's lovely face to her own, so marred and altered. Frequently she gave herself great pain by putting up her bandage to look at them, and then went through mental torture at the thought that he was comparing her with Aurea, regretting perhaps that he was tied to such a wreck of a woman. Yet, through her anguish was a certain contradictory gladness at the change Aurea's coming seemed to have worked in Forbes, making him more like his old self than he had lately been.

A cheerful, sympathetic soul was Aurea, never complaining of heat, mosquitoes, bad food, and the many discomforts of the bush, and giving dainty touches to the crude housekeeping which, now, blind Brenda was incapable of directing. Aurea's camera, which she took out on her rides, put an artistic



Brenda sang "Home, Sweet Home," in which the bushmen joined.

"THE LUCK OF THE LEURA."—BY MRS. CAMPBELL PRAED.

interest into Forbes's life. The little marble Ariadne of the Vatican, pathetically out of keeping with the slab lean-to where he wrote up the station log and entered his branding tallies, had fed but poorly Forbes's æsthetic cravings. Brenda could not accompany them on their rides. She stayed in her dark room, dropping laudanum into her smarting eyes and brooding over her morbid griefs. Nor did she know much of what was going on at any time, for she could not bear the glare of the verandah, and the parlour-lamp made her eyes ache worse. This, however, she did know: the pleasure of Aurea's society kept Forbes from those camping-out expeditions and the prospecting trips which, futile though they were, had been his chief excitement for many months. But apparently there was no gold about the Leura—nothing but the "iron pirates," as old Mr. Berris had called them; and the big grave filled with them had long lain untouched and almost forgotten.

This Christmas, Brenda had not been able to do anything towards the dinner. The stockman's wife had cooked it badly, and Aurea and Forbes and Jack Berris—who was a frequent visitor at Kooroon—had made the plum-pudding between them.

It wasn't much of a dinner. They had no turkey this time. The stockman

Brenda's bed-room, which looked out on the garden. It was a corner room and had two windows, one, a French one, opening on to the verandah and in a line with those of the parlour; the other, screened by a bough-shade covered with native cucumber, was at right angles with a fence and gate giving on to the back premises, and looked on a gravel walk between some mandarin orange-trees that led tortuously to the front verandah. Brenda sat here alone in the darkness. She had stolen away from the rest of the party lounging on the verandah, believing she was not missed. The light from the parlour worried her eyes, and so did the smoke from the men's pipes.

A song with a "Coo-ée" chorus was going on. Aurea sat at the old piano playing the accompaniment, and as the last "Coo-ée" died away, another "Coo-ée" answered it from the plain—the mailman's particular call. Brenda heard it from her window, and she heard Aurea, rising from the piano, say, "Come along, Forbes. Let us get the bag."

There was a general dispersion, and in a few minutes Brenda was aware that Jack Berris and the new-chum had brought in the Teelbar bag and were discussing a letter from a butcher wanting fat cattle. But Aurea and Forbes must have had



Brenda sank back in her chair.

had killed a calf, and Forbes and Aurea and Jack Berris had gone shooting that morning over the only waterhole not quite empty, and had brought home a couple of wild duck. Aurea had got some red berries from the scrub and a few flaring hibiscus flowers, and she had put mistletoe round the old kerosene lamp. It seemed to Brenda, when she came into the parlour led by her husband, and lifted her shade, suffering stabs of pain as she did so, that this was a sort of travesty of that bridal Christmas twenty years before.

By an odd coincidence, mail-day fell on Christmas Day this year, too, and the mailman was late—not McGrath; he was dead.

"A Merry Christmas! Mrs. Vallis," said Jack Berris with forced geniality.

He looked almost tragic, and Brenda wondered why.

"A Merry Christmas! Mrs. Vallis," echoed a Teelbar new-chum who had ridden over for the afternoon.

Forbes put Aurea in his wife's place at the head of the table. It was done solely that Brenda might be saved the effort of helping her guests—and, indeed, Aurea had often sat there on that account, for Brenda's blindness made her helpless. But Brenda, as she saw pretty Aurea facing Forbes, thought bitterly within herself that only last session they had passed in the Leichardt's Land Houses of Assembly a Bill sanctioning marriage with a deceased wife's sister.

Dinner was over; the stars shone out and the pointers of the Southern Cross, dipping down towards the plain, were visible from the window of

something special to say to each other, for they had gone round through the gate in the fence, and were coming along between the orange-trees. Brenda, tilting up her shade, could see the outlines of their forms very close together, Forbes with his head bent downward, and Aurea clinging to him, both hands on his arm, her lovely face upraised to his. Brenda lowered the shade—even the moonlight hurt. Some agitated words of Aurea's reached her.

"... All the world to me!" And then: "I can't bear it, Forbes—it's no use trying. I'd rather go right away than stay here and drive the man I love to desperation. But I should break my heart either way. And oh, this horrible barrier!—when we might be so happy! It's cruel! It's—just impossible! Forbes, can't you do anything? Can't you help me?" The ring of emotion in Forbes's voice as he answered pierced anew the heart of his listening wife.

"Aurea, you know there's nothing in the world I wouldn't do for you. But oh, my dear little woman, you were made for something better than this hell of a life. I couldn't have it on my conscience that I'd helped you to that."

A sobbing murmur came from Aurea, and the two passed on out of sight and hearing.

A quarter of an hour later, Brenda moved from the window into the darkness of the room. Now she was certain that Forbes and Aurea loved each other. She would do what she had been meditating for days.

First she sat down to a writing-table near the French window, and fumbling

with the matches, lighted a candle. Then she raised her bandage and rapidly scribbled a few lines—

MY BELOVED HUSBAND,—Once I told you that I could not outlive my beauty, for which you cared so much, so that if ever you ceased to love me, I should destroy myself. Dearest, the time has come, and I know that it is best for both of us. I have brought you ill-fortune. Perhaps now the luck will turn. In Aurea you will love what I once was, and so I shall live in your heart always. Farewell, Beloved!

She enclosed the letter in an envelope, which she directed to Forbes. Then she took the candle, carrying it unsteadily, and went into a verandah-room, divided from the larger one by a curtain, where were the washstand and shelf with her lotions. She put the candle down as soon as she had found the laudanum-bottle and a glass.

Her back was to the bed-room, and she did not hear a step in the verandah or know that Forbes had come in by the French window. He was carrying a lamp with a big green shade which they brought in of evenings when he or Aurea read to Brenda. In the other hand, was a bundle of letters. He put them down on the table. The envelope bearing his name attracted his attention, and he opened and read it.

Meanwhile, Brenda was pouring the laudanum into the glass. Her hand trembled: the bandage dropped over her eyes, and much of the potion went on to her dress. She put the draught to her lips and was about to drink it, when suddenly her arm was seized from behind.

"Great Heavens, Brenda! What is this you are doing? You haven't swallowed any of it, have you?"

She shook her head. The glass had fallen and was broken.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, lifting her up and carrying her into the next room, where he placed her on the sofa and knelt by her side. She feebly put up her bandage, and gave a cry as she saw his agonised face.

"My wife! What is this ghastly fancy that has half turned your brain? I've read the letter you wrote me. Surely it is not possible you can believe that I love Aurea better than I love you—my own wife, who has borne so much for me?"

He pressed her to his breast, and his kisses gave the lie to her dreadful suspicion. Her look was wild and glad. Words broke stammeringly from her lips.

"How should I tell? . . . You cared so much for my beauty. . . . And now I have lost it all. I am ugly and nearly blind. . . . And Aurea is just what I was. I seemed to read your heart when you looked at her—I wasn't too blind for that. . . . And a little while ago I heard you talking—you and she—"

"You heard us talking?"

"Outside my window. . . . She told you it was best she should go away. She spoke of the barrier between you. . . . And you said—"

He interrupted her with a laugh.

"My poor darling! Yes, I know what you heard. I ought to have told you sooner, but Aurea thought it would worry you and make your eyes worse. It's Jack Berris, not I, who is in love with Aurea; and the worst of it is she loves him. They both know each other's feelings, but he has the pride of the devil, and won't

speak. Says he has no right to ask her to marry him while Teelbar is in the Bank's clutches—and when I realise what I've brought you to, my Brenda, I agree with him. He came over to-day to have a last look at Aurea before he goes off to the Gulf. And Aurea thinks he's sure to be killed by blacks or die of fever. And, since he won't stop and work off the Teelbar mortgage while she's within fifteen miles of him, the poor girl suggests that she should go back to England. Now do you understand?"

Yes, Brenda understood. There was no need for further explanations as far as they two were concerned. Presently Forbes exclaimed—

"But, by Jove! I'd almost forgotten the bit of good news I came in to tell you. It's a queer thing it should arrive on Christmas Day. Brenda, do you remember

that Christmas twenty years ago—the time when we thought we'd found a gold-mine, and our gold turned out to be only iron pyrites?"

"Yes, I remember. The Luck of the Leura."

"And now the Luck of the Leura has come up again! Do you remember the heap of specimens we buried? Well, I happened to come across the grave of our hopes, as we used to call it, not long ago, and curiosity made me dig up some of the bits of ore. I saw that they'd changed a good deal—looked honey-combed—and there was yellow stuff so like gold that I sent a bit down to be assayed. The extraordinary thing is that by some natural chemical process—filtering of moisture, perhaps, through the rubbish we filled the pit with, or the want of moisture, maybe—the oxidising has really taken place, and those bits of ore are full of gold. But that's not all. A new process has been discovered for extracting gold from iron pyrites—so the assayer says; and—well, Brenda darling, you see that I rightly named you the Luck of the Leura when you picked up that piece of ore. Good-bye now to bad times, misery, and blight! We shall have that little place overlooking Sydney Harbour that we built in our dreams. And as soon as I can get a buggy-team together you are going south to an

oculist and a good climate. Those blue eyes will soon be as bright as Aurea's, and my Brenda will have become young and beautiful again."

"But Aurea?" said Brenda.

"If I'd only looked at my mail before Aurea enticed me into discussing her love troubles, there'd have been less tragedy lying round this evening. I'm pretty sure the 'iron pirates' will fix things up all right for Berris and Aurea. Before long they'll be singing love songs to each other instead of Christmas Carols. Listen, Brenda! It's the one you're so fond of. Let's go and join in."

Hand-in-hand husband and wife went into the moonlit verandah, and the last verse of the carol swelled louder—

Then be ye glad, good people, this night of all the year,
And light ye up your candles; His star is shining near.
And all in earth and heaven, our Christmas Carol sing.
Goodwill and Peace and Glory! And all the bells shall ring.

THE END.



Suddenly her arm was seized from behind.



Now Jack and Bill were liberty men
Ashore on the Christmas Eve,
And they kept it up with Longshore Ben
Till they'd well outstayed their leave,
"With a yo, heave ho, and-a rumbelow!
Dull care by the board let's heave, Yo ho!
Dull care by the board let's heave."

THE TARS' ALARM.

DRAWN BY CHARLES DE LACY.

The moon was rising weird and chill,
And the hour was half-past two,
When into the boat stepped Jack and Bill—
Dull care by the board they threw.
But a silence fell on their "Yo, heave ho!"
For they saw the ghost of old Benbow
As he fought with a phantom crew.



Old Christmas Day's the day for toasts,
For hearts are full and wine is good.
The Briton of his Empire boasts;
Love of the land stirs in his blood;
The young voice with the old voice blends:
"God bless and keep all absent friends!"

CHRISTMAS IN THE BACKWOODS:
ABSENT FRIENDS.

DRAWN BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.

The father speaks with husky throat,
The mother prays with heaving breast;
The winds of God take up the cry
And bear it forth towards the West.
Back comes the echo o'er the foam:
"God keep our dear ones safe at home!"



Last summer all the country flamed
With news of victory,
How Wellington, "the Iron" named,
Dribbled Nap. beyond the sea.

AFTER WATERLOO.
DRAWN BY EDWARD READ.

But now it seems just twice as true,
Not faint and far away;
For Tom is home from Waterloo
With stories of the fray.



Memories of hard-fought fields
Rise about us, as to-night
Dying year to new year yields
Place, and passes out of sight.

NEW YEAR'S EVE IN BARRACKS.

DRAWN BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.

But with those of ancient meed,
Mindful of more recent strife,
Praise we one whose generous deed
Saved a simple private's life.



THE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS: A COUNTRY DANCE FOR OLD AND YOUNG.

DRAWN BY LUCIEN DAVIS, R.I.



At the dawn of Christmas Day,
From the belfry on the hill
Come the silvery tones that say,
"Peace on earth, to men goodwill."

CHRISTMAS DAWN.
DRAWN BY HOLLAND TRINGHAM.

Rites may pass and faiths be broken,
But unchanged, through good or ill,
Stand the tidings, angel-spoken—
"Peace on earth, to men goodwill."



"Phyllis, never, never flirt—least of all, when at a dance;
Flirting is a thing to hurt; love is not a game of chance."
"But when someone else is letting time slip by, what can I do?
Surely I can't help forgetting just one dance with Jack—or two?"

TO PHYLLIS—IN A DILEMMA.

DRAWN BY EDWARD READ.

"Ah! dear Phyllis, stand your ground; scorn the false, cling to the fair.
Love's a dance that should be round; never try to make it square.
So, come smooth or stormy weather, you shall find him staunch and true,
As you dance through life together—just old Jack, dear heart, and you."



It's not just like the Christmas time
We celebrate at home,
There's nothing here of snow or rime;
But still the flagons foam,
And we keep the feast in the good old way—
With "Here's to the King! Hip, Hip, Hooray!"

A TROOP DINNER IN INDIA.

DRAWN BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.

And, when the fun's well started,
The Colonel comes along,
So genial and true-hearted—
We give his health in song;
And he in turn this toast will call—
"Good luck, my men, attend you all!"



In drifting flakes he came aboard
And on the deck he laid him down;
We gave him shape, a swab for sword,
The skipper's Sunday hat for crown.

OUR CHRISTMAS PASSENGER.
DRAWN BY CYRUS CUNEO.

But when the purser asked his fare,
And only got an icy look
For satisfaction, then and there
We brought our passenger to book.



'Tis dead of night on the Niger banks,
The wind is still, the stars are bright;
We drain a cup to those at home
Who think of us this Christmas night—
When, hark! A sound of stealthy feet
The forest king doth seek his meat.

CHRISTMAS NIGHT IN WEST AFRICA :
AN UNBIDDEN GUEST.

DRAWN BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.

See, now he comes towards the tent;
Beneath his feet the grasses part.
Six lives demand a steady aim
To speed the bullet to his heart!
Bang! Bang! A leap! A roar of pain!
The little camp may feast again.

THE MAZED ELECTION (1768).

A PASSAGE FROM THE ORAL HISTORY OF ARDEVORA.

By "Q."

Illustrated by F. H. Townsend.

I.

WOMAN Suffrage? It's surprising to me how light some folks will talk—with a Providence, for all they know, waiting round the corner to take them at their word. I put my head in at the Working Man's Institute last night, and there was the new Coastguard officer talking like a book, arguing about Woman Suffrage in a way that made me nervous. "Look 'ee here," he was saying, "a woman must be either married, or onmarried, or otherwise. Keep they three divisions clear in your heads, and then I'll ask you to follow me—" And all the company sitting round with their mouths open. I came away: I couldn't stand it. It put me in mind how my poor mother used to warn me against squinting for fun. "One of these days," she'd say, "the wind'll take and change sudden while you're doing it; and theré you'll be fixed and looking fifty ways for Sunday until we meet in the land of marrow and fatness."

And here in Ardevora, of all places—where the womenkind be that masterful already, a man must get into his sea-boots before he can call his soul his own! Why, there was a woman here once that never asked for a vote in her life, and yet capsized an Election for Parliament—candidates, voters, and the whole apple-cart—as easy as you might turn over a plate. Did you ever hear tell of Kitty Lebow and her eight tall daughters? No; I daresay not. The world's old and losing its memory when it begins to talk of Woman Suffrage.

This Kitty, or Christian, or Christiana Lebow was by birth a Bottrell: and a finer family than the Pottrells, by their own account, you wouldn't find in all England. Not that it matters whether they came over with William the

Norman, nor whether they could once on a time ride from sea to sea on their own acres. For Kitty was the last to carry the name, and she left it in Ardevora vestry the day she signed marriage with Paul Lebow (or, as he wrote it, Lebeau—"b-e-a-u"): and the property had gone generations before. As she said 'pon her death-bed, "five-foot-six of church-hay will hold the only two achers left to me," she being a little body and very facetious to the last, and meaning her legs, of course.

Now the reason I can't tell you: but the mischief with the Bottrells was this: That for generation after generation all the spirit of the family went to the females. The men just dandered away their time and their money, fell into declines, or had fits and went out like the snuff of a candle. But the women couldn't be held nor bound, lived to any age they pleased, and either kept their sweethearts on the hook or married them and made their lives a burden. Oh, a bean-fed sex, Sir, and monstrous handsome! And Kitty, though little, was as handsome as any, and walked Ardevora streets with her eight daughters, all tall as grenadiers and terrible as an army with banners.

Her father, old Piers Bottrell, had been a ship's captain: a very tidy old fellow in his behaviour, but muddled in mind, especially towards the end; so that when he died (which he did in his bed, quite peaceful) he must needs take and haunt the house. There wasn't a ha'porth of reason for it, that anyone could discover; and Kitty didn't mind it one farthing. But some say it frightened her husband into his grave: though I reckon he took worse fright at Kitty presenting him with eight daughters one after the other. With a woman like that, you can't



"O-ho! And so, belike, are the eight handsome daughters?"

say where accident ends and love of mischief begins. And for that matter, there was no telling why she'd married the man at all except for mischief: his father and mother being poor French refugees that had come to Ardevora thirty years before, and been given shelter by the borough charity in the old Ugnés House*—the same that old Piers Bottrell afterwards bought and died in: and Lebow himself, though born in the town and a fisherman by calling, never able to get his tongue round good plain English until the day he was drowned on the whiting-grounds and left Kitty a widow-woman.

All this, as you'll see by-and-by, has to do in one way or another with the Great Election, which took place in the year '68. (The way I'm so glib with the date is that Kit Lebow was so proud of her doings on that day, she had a silver cup made for a *momentum* and used to measure out her guineas in it: and her great-gran'daughter, Mary Ann Cocking, has the cup to this day in her house in Nanjivey Street, where I've seen it a score of times and spelled out the writing, "C. L."—for Christian Lebow—"1768.") And concerning this Election you must know that "the Duke's interest," as they called it—that's to say, the Whigs—had ruled the roost in Ardevora for more than fifty years; mainly through the Duke's agent, old Squire Martin of Tregoose, that collected the rents, held pretty well all the public offices inside his ten fingers, and would save up a grudge for time-out-of-mind against any man that crossed him. Two members we returned in those days, and in grown men's memories scarce a Tory among them.

There was grumbling, you may be sure: but the old gang held their way, and thought to carry this Election as easy as the others, until word came down that one of the Tory candidates would be Dr. Macann, the famous Bath physician: and this was a facer.

What made this Dr. Macann such a tearing hot candidate was his having been born at Trudgian, a mile out of town here to the west'ard. The Macanns had farmed Trudgian for maybe a hundred years, having come over from Ireland to start with: a poor, hand-to-mouth lot, respected for nothing but their haveage,† which was understood to be something out of the common. But this Samuel, as he was called, turned out a bright boy with his books, and won his way somehow to Cambridge College; and from College, after doing famously, he took his foot in his hand and went up to walk the London hospitals; and so bloomed out into a great doctor, with a gold-headed cane and a wonderful gift with the women—a personable man, too, with a neat leg, a high colour, and a voice like a church organ. The best of the fellow was he helped his parents and never seemed ashamed of 'em. And for this, and because he'd done credit to the town, the folks couldn't make too much of him.

Well, as I said, this putting up of Macann was a facer for the Duke's men, and they met at the George and Dragon Inn to talk over their unpopularity. There was old Squire Martin, as wicked as a buck rat in a sink; and his son Bob, that had lately taken over the Duke's agency; and his brother Ned, the drunken Vicar of Trancells; and his second cousin John Martin, otherwise John à Hall, all wit and no character; and old Parson Polsue, with his curate, old Mr. Grandison, the one almost too shaky to hold a churchwarden pipe while the other lighted it; and Roger Newte, whose monument you see over the hill—a dapper, youngish-looking man, very careful of his finger-nails and smooth in his talk till he got you in a corner. Last but not least was this Roger Newte, who had settled here as Collector of Customs and meant to be Mayor next year; a man to go where the Devil can't, and that's between the oak and the rind.

Well, there they were met, drinking punch and smoking their clays and discussing this and that; and Mr. Newte keeping the peace between John à Hall, with his ill-regulated tongue, and the old Parson, who, to say truth, was half the cause of their unpopularity, the church services having sunk to a public scandal; and yet they durstn't cast him over, by reason that he owned eight ramshackle houses, and his curate a couple besides, and by mock-sale could turn these into as many brand-new voters.

"There's nothing for it but pluck," said Mr. Newte. "We must make a new Poor Rate. They've been asking a new one for years; and, bejimmers! I hope they'll like the one they get."

The old Squire stroked his chin. "That's a bit too dangerous, Newte."

"Where's the danger? Churchwardens and Overseers, we can count on every man."

"The parish will appeal, as sure as a gun. King's Bench will send down a *mandamus*, and the game's up. I don't want to go to prison at my time of life."

"I know something of the law," said Mr. Newte—and indeed he'd studied it at Lincoln's Inn, and kept more knowledge under his wig than any man in the borough. "I know something of law, and there's no question of going to prison. The Tories will appeal to the next Quarter Sessions, and Quarter Sessions will maybe quash the Rate; and that'll take time. Then the Overseers will sit still for a week or two, or a month or two, until the Tories lose patience and apply to London for a writ. Down comes the writ, we'll say: Whereupon the Overseers will sit down and make out a new Rate just a shade different from the last, and the Tories will have to begin again—Quarter Sessions, Court o' King's Bench, *mandamus*—"

"King's Bench will send down more like, and attach the Overseers for contempt of Court," suggested young Bob Martin, who was one of them.

"Not a bit of it; but I'll allow you may find it hard to keep their pluck to the sticking-point. Very well, then here's another plan: When it comes to the writ, the Overseers can make out a new Rate 'agreeable to the form and tenor of the same,' as the words go. But a new Rate's worthless until you, Squire, and you,

Parson, have signed the allowance for it as magistrates: and now comes your turn to give trouble."

"And how 'm I to do that?" asked the old Squire.

"Why, by keeping out of the way, to be sure. Take a holiday: find out some little spa that suits your complaint, and go and drink the waters."

"Ay, do, Parson," chimed in John à Hall. "Take Grandison, here, along with you, and we'll all have a holiday together."

"At the worse," chipped in Newte, "they'll fine you fifty pounds for misbehaviour."

"Fifty pounds? Fine me fifty pounds?" the Parson quavered, his pipe-stem wagging.

"Bless your heart, Sir, we can work it in somehow with the Election expenses. But it may not come to that. Parliament's more than five years old already, and I'll warrant the King dissolves it by next spring at latest: which reminds me that keeping an eye on the Voters' List is all very well, but unless we can find a tearing hot pair of candidates, this Macann may unsaddle us after all."

II.

Well, this or something like it was the plan agreed on; and for candidates they managed to get the Duke's own son, Lord William, and a Major Dyngwall, a friend of his, very handsome to look at, but shy in the mouth-speech. With Doctor Macann the Tories put up a Mr. Saule, from Bristol, who took a terrible deal of snuff and looked wise, but had some maggot in his head that strong drink isn't good for a man. Why or how this should be he might have known but couldn't tell, being a desperate poor speaker, and, if possible, a worse hand at it than Major Dyngwall.

I won't take you through all the battle over the Poor Rate. You understand that the right of voting for Parliament belonged to all the inhabitants of the borough paying Scot and Lot; and who these were the Rate-sheet determined. So you may fancy the pillaloo that went up when the Overseers posted their new assessment on the church door and 'twas found they'd ruled out no less than sixty voters known, or suspected to be, in Dr. Macann's interest. The Tories appealed to Quarter Sessions, of course, and the Rate was quashed. On their side, Roger Newte and Bob Martin kept the Overseers up to the proper mark of stubbornness: so to London the matter went, and from London down came the order for a new assessment. But by this time Parliament's days were numbered; and, speculating on this, Mr. Newte (who was now Mayor of the Borough) played a stroke in a thousand. He persuaded the Overseers to make a return to the writ certifying they had obeyed it to the best of their skill and conscience, and drawn up a new list: which list they posted a fortnight later, and only seven days—as it turned out—before Parliament dissolved: and will you believe it, but the only difference between it and the old one was that they'd added the name of Christiana Lebow, widow—who, being a woman, hadn't a vote at all!

But wait a bit! The Overseers, choosing their time, had this new list posted in the church porch at ten o'clock one morning; and, having posted it, stepped across the road to the George and Dragon. The old inn used to stand slap opposite the church; and there, in the parlour-window, were assembled all the Duke's men—Squire Martin and his son, Roger Newte, John à Hall, the Parson, and all the rest of the gang—as well to see how the people would take it as to give the timorous Overseers a backing. This was Newte's idea—to sit there in full view, put a bold face on it, and have the row—if row there was to be—over at once. And, to top it up, they had both the Whig candidates with them—these having arrived in Ardevora three days before, and begun their canvass, knowing that Parliament must be dissolved and the new writs issued in a few days at farthest.

Well, a crowd gathered at once about the list, and some ran off with the dare-devil news of it, while others hung about and grumbled, and let out a few oaths every now and then, and looked like men in two minds about stoning the windows opposite, where the Duke's gang stood as careless as brass, sipping their punch and covering the poor Overseers, that half expected to be ducked in the harbour sooner or later for their morning's work.

For one solid hour they sat there, fairly daunting the crowd: but as the church clock struck eleven, Major Dyngwall, the candidate—that was talking to old Parson Polsue, and carrying it off very fairly—puts his eyeglass up of a sudden, and, says he, "Amazons, begad!" meaning, as I have heard it explained, that here were some out-of-the-common females.

And out of the common they were—Kit Lebow with her eight daughters, all wafting up the street like a bevy of peacocks in their best hoops and bonnets: Kit herself sailing afore, with her long malacca staff tap-tapping the cobbles, and her tall daughters behind like a tall bodyguard, two and two—Maria, Constantia, Elizabeth Jane, Perilla, Christian the Younger, Marcella, Thomasine, and Lally. Along she comes, marches up to the board—the crowd making way for her—and reads down the list. "H'm," says she, and wheeling to the rightabout, marches straight across to the open window of the George.

"Give you good morning, gentlemen," says she, dropping a curtsy. "I see you've a-put me on the Voters' List; and, with your leave, I'd like a look at your candidates."

"With pleasure, Madam," says Lord William, starting up from the table where he was writing at the back of the room, and coming forward with a bow. And Major Dyngwall bowed likewise to her and the whole company of her daughters spreading out behind her like a fan. "Take your glass down from your eye, young man," she said, addressing herself to the Major. "One window should be shelter enough for a sojer—and la! you're none so ill-featured for a pair of Whigs."

* Probably "Huguenots' House." † Lineage.



"You're none so ill-featured for a pair of Whigs."

"THE MAZED ELECTION."—BY "Q."

"Ay," put in John à Hall, "they'll compare with your Sammy Macann, mistress." And he pitched to sing a verse of his invention, that the Whigs of the town afterwards got by heart—

"Doctor Macann
's an Irishman,
He's got no business here;
Mister Saule
He's nothin' at all,
He won't lev us have no beer."

"Well, indeed now," answered Kitty, pitching her voice back for the crowd to hear, "'tis the Martins should know if the Macanns be Irish, and what business an Irishman has in Ardevora: for, if I recollect, the first Macann and the first Martin were shipwrecked together coming over from Dunganarvan in a cattle-boat, and they do say 'twas Macann owned the cattle and Martin drove 'em. And as for Mr. Saule," she went on, while the crowd grinned to see John à Hall turning red in the gills, "if he stops off the beer in this town, 'tis yourself will be the better for it, whoever's hurt."

"May I have the pleasure to learn this lady's name?" asked Lord William very politely, turning to the old Squire.

"She's just an eccentric body, my Lord," said he; "and, I'm sorry to say, a violent enemy to your Lordship's cause."

"Hoots and roots!" says Kitty. "I'm Christian Lebow, that used to be Bottrell: which means that your forefathers and mine, my Lord, came over to England together, like the Macanns and the Martins, though maybe some time before, and not in a cattle-boat. No enemy am I to your Lordship, nor to the Major here, as I'll prove any day you choose to drink a dish of tea with me or to taste my White Ale; but only to the ill company you keep with these Martins and Newtes, that have robbed sixty honest men of their votes and given one to me that can't use it. I can't use it to keep you out of Parliament-house. I would if I could—honest fighting between gentlefolks: but I may use it before the Election's over to make these rogues laugh on the wrong side of their faces."

She used to say afterwards that the words came into her mouth like prophesying: but I believe she just spoke out in her temper, as women will. At any rate, Lord William smiled and bowed, and said he, "The Major and I will certainly do ourselves the pleasure of calling and tasting your ale, Mrs. Lebow."

"The recipe is three hundred years old," said Kitty, and swept him a curtsy, the like of which for stateliness you don't see nowadays: it wants practice and sea-room. And all her eight daughters curtsied to the daps behind her in a half-moon, to the delight of Major Dyngwall, that had been studying Lally, the youngest (which is short for Eulalia), through his eyeglass. And with that, to the admiration of the multitude, they faced about and went sailing up the street.

III.

Well, I suppose in the heat of the fight—the nomination taking place a few days afterwards, and the struggle being a mighty doubtful one, for all the trick of the Rating-list, against which the Tories had sent up an appeal—Lord William forgot all about his promise to call and taste Mrs. Lebow's White Ale. It came into his mind of a sudden on the day before the Election, being Sunday morning, and he breakfasting with the Major and half-a-dozen of their supporters up at Tregoose, where old Squire Martin kept open house for the Whigs right through the contest.

"Plague take it!" says he, running his eye down the Voters' List between his sips of coffee. "I've clean neglected that old lady and her brew.

I suppose 'tis dreadful stuff?" he goes on, rather anxious-like, lifting an eye towards the old Squire.

"I've never had the privilege to taste it," says the Squire.

"Oh, it's none so bad," puts in the Major carelessly.

"Why, Dyngwall—how the Dickens alive do *you* know?"

"I dropped in the other day—in fact, I've called once or twice. The old lady's monstrous entertaining," answered the Major, pretty pink in the face.

"O-ho!" Lord William screwed up one eye. "And so, belike, are the eight handsome daughters? But look ye here, Dyngwall," says he, "I can't have you skirmishing on your own account in this fashion. If there's a baby left to be kissed in this town—or anything older, for that matter—we go shares, my lad."

"You needn't be so cussedly officious, need you?" says the Major, firing up, to the astonishment of all.

Lord William looks at him for a moment. "My dear fellow," says he, "I beg your pardon."

And the Major was mollified at once, the two (as I said) being old friends.

"But all the same," says his Lordship to himself, "I'd best go call on this old lady without losing time." So he put it to Squire Martin: "I've a promise to keep, and to-morrow

we shall be busy-all. Couldn't we start early, and pay Mrs. Lebow a visit on our way to church?"

"You won't get no comfort out of calling," said the Squire: "but let it be as you please."

So off they set: and as Kitty and her daughters were tying their bonnet-strings for churchgoing—blue and gold every one of them (these being the Tory colours), and only Lally thinking to herself that scarlet and orange might, maybe, suit her complexion better—there came a knock at the door, and squinting over her blind Kitty caught sight of Lord William and the Major, with the old Squire behind them, that had never crossed her doorstep in his life.

She wasn't going to lower her colours, of course. But down she went in her blue and gold, opened the door, and curtsied. (Oh! the pink of manners!) "No inconvenience at all," she said, and if ever a cordial was needed it would be before sitting out one of old Parson Palsy's forty-year-old sermons. So out came



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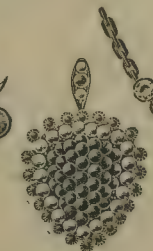
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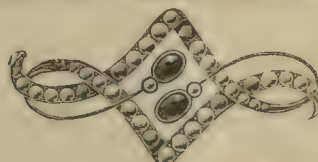
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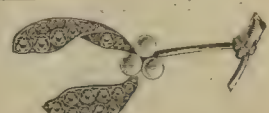
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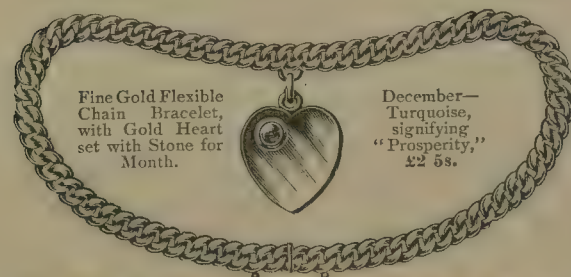
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the famous White Ale, with the long-stemmed glasses proper to drink it from, and a dish of ratafias to justify the stomach. And behold, all was bowing and compliments, and enmity forgot, till Lord William happened to say—

"Strong stuff, Squire—eh? The Major should look to his head with it, after his morning tankard: but for coffee-drinkers like you and me I reckon there's no danger."

Kitty gave a little gasp, all to herself. "Do you take coffee with your breakfast, my Lord?" she asked—and declared to her last day it seemed like another person speaking, her voice sounded so unnatural.

"Ha-bitually," says Lord William, and begins discoursing on the coffee-bean, and how it cleared the brain.

Kitty couldn't look at him steady, but was forced to glance away and out of window. The tears and the fun were rising together within her like a spring tide. Lord William thought that her mind was running on the clock, and she wished to be rid of them. So the bowing and compliments began again, and inside of ten minutes the visitors had made their congees and were out in the street.

The door was scarcely shut upon them when Kitty sank down all of a heap in her armchair and began to rock herself to and fro.

"Oh, oh, oh," she began; and her daughters truly thought at first 'twas hysterics. "I'll give it forty minutes," she said. "Maria, if 'twasn't so near upon church-time, I'd ask you to loosen my stays. White Ale upon coffee! Oh, oh, oh!" And with that she started up. "Forty minutes! What it'll do in forty minutes no earthly power can tell. But get ready, girls, and follow close till I'm safe in church."

So forth she sailed, and her eight daughters behind her, down the street, in by the churchyard gate, and up through the crowd to the porch with her face set like the calm of Doomsday.

IV.

Well, the congregation settled itself, and service began, and not a sign—as why should there be?—of any feelings but holy devotion. The Whigs looked at their books, and the Tories looked at their books; and poor old Curate Grandison lost his place and his spectacles, and poor old Parson Polsue dropped asleep in the First Lesson. He'd neglected two parishes to come and preach the sermon: for Ardevora, you must know, was one of three livings he held besides a canonry, and he kept Grandison to serve the three, that being all he could afford after paying for his carriage-and-pair and postillions to carry him back and forth between us and Penzance, where he lodged for the sake of his asthma and the little card-parties for which Penzance was famous in those days. But not even an Election Sunday could keep him properly awake. So on went the old comedy, as by law established; the congregation, Whig and Tory, not able to hear one word in ten, but taking their cues from Tommy Size, the parish clerk.

The first sign of something amiss came about midway in the hymn before the sermon, with old Squire Martin's setting down his book and dropping into his seat very sudden. Few noticed it, the pew being a tall one: but the musicians overlooking it from the gallery saw him crossing his hands over his waistcoat, which caused one or two to play their notes false: and Nance Julian in the pew

behind heard him groan: "I can't sit it out! Not for a hundred pounds can I sit it out!"

By this time Parson Polsue, with his sermon tucked under his arm, was tottering up the pulpit stairs, and Churchwarden Hancock standing underneath, as usual, to watch him arrive safe or to break his fall if he tumbled. And just as he reached the top and caught hold of the desk cushion to stay himself, Lord William dropped out of view in the face of the congregation, and the hymn—music and singing together—ciphered out like an organ with its bellows slit.

The next moment open flew the door of the Tregoose pew, and out poured Lord William and Squire Martin with judgment on their faces, making a bee-line for the fresh air; and after them Major Dyngwall with a look of concern; and a'ter him young Bob Martin, that had only waited to pick up the others' hats.

Well, you can't run a spark through a barrel of gunpowder. Like wildfire it flew through the church that the Duke's party and the Parson had quarrelled, and

this was a public protest. Whig and Tory settled that with one scrape of the feet, and Major Dyngwall turned in the porch to find the whole crowd at his heels.

"My good people," says he, "pray don't alarm yourselves! I—I don't quite know what's the matter: a sudden indisposition—nothing serious. Do, please, go back!"

Go back? Not a bit of it. "You're quite right, Sir—disgrace to a Christian country—high time for a public example—Stand to it, Sir, and the Bishop will have to interfere—Three cheers for the Red and Orange! Three cheers for Religion and no Abuses! Three cheers for Lord William and Major Dyngwall! Hip-hip-hooray!" Do what the Major might, the crowd swept him and the poor sufferers through the churchyard and across the street, and hung cheering around the George and Dragon, while he dosed the pair inside with hot brandy-and-water.

And all this while Kitty stood—

as she declared ever after—with the thoughts hissing in her head like eggs in a frying-pan. She heard the crowd cheering outside, and felt the votes slipping away with every cheer. She cast her eyes up to the pulpit, and there, through a haze, saw old Parson Polsue rubbing his spectacles and shaking like an aspen. Her wits only came back to her when the Tory candidates, in the pew before her, reached for their hats and prepared to follow the mob. Dr. Macann was actually fumbling with the button of the door. Quick as thought then she seized a hassock, sprang on it, and, reaching over the partition, pressed a hand down on his chestnut wig.

"Aw, sit still—sit still, man!" she commanded. "Thee'rt throwing helve after hatchet, I tell 'ee. What's a colic, after all?"

"I don't follow you, Mrs. Lebow," said the Doctor: and small blame to him.

"Never you mind about understanding," said Kitty. "But sit you down and keep your eye on the Parson. See the colour on him—that's anger, my dear. And see his jaw—full of blessed stubbornness! Nine good votes he has, and old Grandison a couple more: and every one of 'em as good as cast for you,



"Aw, sit still—sit still, man!"

if you keep your seat. Sit still for two minutes now, and to-morrow you shall sit for Ardevora."

"But the crowd?" the Doctor couldn't help murmuring, though he obeyed none the less.

Kitty's eye began to twinkle. "Leave the crowd to me," she was beginning, when her eye lit on John à Hall, that had entered and was making his way towards the pulpit, from which in the fury of his anger, old Polsue was climbing down with a nimbleness you wouldn't believe. And with that she almost laughed out, for a worse peacemaker the Whigs couldn't have chosen. But Major Dyngwall had sent him, having none to advise, and being near to his wits' end, poor man.

"Beg your pardon, Parson," began John à Hall, stepping up with that grin on his face which he couldn't help and which the Parson abominated: "but I'm here to bring Lord William's compliments and apologies, and assure you from him that your sermon had nothing to do with his colic. Nothing whatever!"

Parson Polsue opened his mouth to answer, but thought better of it. I reckon he remembered the sacred edifice. At any rate he went past John à Hall with a terrific turn of speed, and old Grandison after him: and the next news was the vestry-door slammed to behind them both, as 'twere with the very wind of wrath.

"And my poor mother used to recommend it for the colic!" said Kitty, which puzzled the Doctor worse than ever.

V.

Before evening 'twas known through Ardevora that the Parson's votes and interest had been booked by the Tories: which, of course, only made the Church rebels (as you might call them) the more set on standing by their conversion and voting for the Whigs. Nobody could tell their numbers for certain, but nobody put them down under twenty: and both the Doctor and Mr. Saule called on Kitty again that evening with faces like fiddles. But Kitty wasn't to be daunted. "My dears," she said, "if the worst comes to the worst, and you can't win these votes back by four o'clock to-morrow, I've a stocking full of guineas at your service: and I han't lived in Ardevora all this while without picking up the knowledge how to spend 'em: and *that's* at your service too. But we'll try a cheaper way first," says she, smiling to herself very comfortably.

Up at Tregoose they'd put Lord William and the old Squire to bed: and a score of Whig supporters spent the best part of the evening downstairs in the dining-room, with Major Dyngwall in the chair, working out the Voters' List and making fresh calculations. On the whole, they felt cheerful enough, and showed it: but they had to own, first, that the Parson's votes were almost as bad as lost, whereas the amount of gains couldn't be reckoned with certainty: and second, that, resting as they did upon a confusion between religious feeling and the colic, 'twas important that Lord William should recover by next morning, show himself about the town and at the hustings, and clinch the mistake. John à Hall—who had a head on his shoulders when parsons weren't concerned—shook it at this. He didn't believe for a moment that Lord William could be brought up to the poll; and as it turned out, he was right. But towards the end of the discussion he brought forward a very clever suggestion.

"I don't know," says he, "if the Major here's an early riser?"

"Moderately," says Major Dyngwall, looking for the moment as if the question took him fairly aback. They didn't think much of this at the time, but it came back to their minds later on.

"Well, then," says John à Hall, "you're all terrible certain about the Parson's votes being lost: but dang me if I've lost hope of 'em yet. Though I can't do it myself, I believe the old fool could be handled. By five in the morning, say, we shall know about Lord William. If he can't leave his bed—and I'll bet he can't—I suggest that the Major steps down, pays an early call, and tells Parson the simple truth from beginning to end."

"An excellent suggestion!" put in Mr. Newte. "I was about to make it myself. There's nothing like telling the truth, after all: and I'll take care it doesn't get about the town till the poll's closed."

Well, so it was arranged: and early next morning, after dressing himself very carefully and making sure that Lord William couldn't leave his room (he was as yellow as an egg, poor fellow, with a kind of mild janders), away the Major starts upon his errand, promising to be back by seven, to be driven down to the poll behind a brass band.

On the stroke of eight, when Roger Newte, as Mayor and Returning Officer, declared the poll open, down the street came the blue-and-gold band, with Dr. Macann and Mr. Saule behind it bowing and smiling in a two-horse shay, and a fine pillaloo of supporters. They cheered like mad to find themselves first in the field, though disappointed in their hearts (I believe), having counted on a turn-up with the opposition band, just to start the day sociably. The Tory candidates climbed the hustings, and there the Doctor fired off six speeches and Mr. Saule a couple, while the votes came rolling in like pennies at the door of a menagerie. And still no sign of the Whigs, nor sound of any band from the direction of Tregoose. By half-past eight Roger Newte was looking nervous, and began to send off small boys to hurry his friends up. Towards nine o'clock Dr. Macann made another speech, and set the crowd roaring with "'Tis the voice of the sluggard," out of Dr. Watts's hymn-book. "But I don't even hear his voice!" said he, very facetious-like: and "Seriously, gentlemen, my Whig friends might be more careful of your feelings. We know that they consider Ardevora their own: but they might at least avoid insulting the British Liberty they have injured"—telling words, these, I can assure you. "Nor," he went on, "is it quite fair treatment of our worthy Mayor here: who cannot be expected, single-

handed, to defy you as he defied the Court of King's Bench and treat your votes as he treated your Rate List." Newte had to stand there and swallow this: though it was poison to him, and he swore next day he'd willingly spend ten years in the pit of the wicked for getting quits with Macann. But what fairly knocked the fight out of him was to see, five minutes later, old Parson Polsue totter up the steps towards him with a jaw stuck out like a mule's, and Grandison behind, and all their contingent. Though made up of Tories to a man, the crowd couldn't help hissing; but it affected the old fellow not a doot.

"Macann and Saule," said he, speaking up sharp and loud: and at the names the hissing became a cheer fit to lift the roofs off their eaves.

Newte fairly forgot himself. "Ha—haven't you seen Major Dyngwall this morning?" he managed to ask.

And with that the crowd below parted, and John à Hall came roaring through it like a bull.

"Where's the Major! Major Dyngwall! Who's seen Major Dyngwall?"

[Continued on page 42.]



"'Twasn't meant to, my son," snapped Kitty.

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The Farmer may Learn to Treat His Own Cattle and Horses.

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symptoms of sickness. Injuries are unavoidable, and prompt attention to these may save life. An excellent work on first aid to animals in cases of accidents and ailments has been published by Elliman, Sons and Co., of Slough, England, giving information that will be of assistance in the emergencies that arise in every herd or flock. The volume contains 188 pages, with fifty illustrations, and devotes considerable space to poultry and dogs, as well as to the larger farm stock. A pleasing feature is the

clearness of the descriptions and the avoidance of technical terms. The treatments prescribed are remarkably simple, calling for the employment of such means as may be found ready to hand on any farm. In addition there is a set of illustrations, indicating the appearance of the teeth of the horse at different ages. Some valuable prescriptions are given for remedies that may be kept in store for immediate use. The care of horses and their needs in the way of water and feed are discussed at some length. So highly was this book appreciated by Major-General Baden-Powell, in South Africa, that he has had each of the troop officers of the constabulary under his command supplied with a copy.



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Oh, gaily they kept their Yule-tide feast
 When Harry the Fifth was King;
 Indulgently smiled the shaveling priest
 As they made the rafters ring.
 "For the time," said he, "is a time for mirth,
 And peace and goodwill o'er all the earth."

THE MEN-AT-ARMS' CHRISTMAS.

DRAWN BY ALLAN STEWART.

So Giles the Gallant went unrebuked
 When he called for one draught more
 In the good black-jack, and slyly looked
 As Margery told his score;
 "For I'll pay it thrice in kisses," cried he,
 And he toasted the maid with three times three.

"Ay, we're all asking that?" called out some person, sarcastic-like: and all began to laugh and to boo. But John à Hall caught at the rail and swung himself up the steps.

"You thundering fools!" he bellowed. "Is it foul play that tickles you? One of our candidates you've contrived to poison, and I've left him at Tregoose between life and death. What have you done with the other?" By this time he had the mob fairly hushed and gaping. "What have you done with the other?" he shouted, banging his fist down on the Returning Officer's table. "Let Parson Polsue speak first, for to my knowledge the Major was bound for his lodgings when last seen."

"I haven't set eyes on him," said Parson Polsue.

"I saw him!" piped up a woman in the crowd. "I saw him, about six this morning. He was walking along the fore-shore, towards Mr. Grandison's."

At this everyone turned to the Curate; but he shook his head. "Major Dyngwall has not called on me this morning. Indeed I have not seen him."

"Then run you and search—half-a-dozen of you!" commanded John à Hall. "I'll get to the bottom of this I warn you. And as for you, Dr. Macann, and you, Mr. Saule—if you haven't learnt the difference between honest fighting and poisoning—kidnapping—murder—maybe—"

But he got no farther. "That's enough of big words," said a voice, very quiet, but so that all had to listen: and behold, there was Kitty Lebow mounting the steps, as cool as cream in a dairy.

She landed on the platform and took a glance about her, and the folk read in

her eye that she had come to enjoy herself. "Reckon I have a right here so well as the best of you, since you put me on the Rate List," says she, with a dry sort of twinkle. And with that she rounded on John à Hall. "I think I heard you talkin' of poison, Mr. Martin," says she, "not to mention kidnapping, and worse. And

you asked, or my ears deceived me, if we knew the difference between poison and fair play? Well, we do. And likewise we know the difference between sickness and shamming; and likewise, again, the difference between making a demonstration in church and walking out because you've three fingers of White Ale inside you and it don't lie down with your other vittles. I ask ye, folks all"—and here she swung round to the crowd—"did ever one of you hear that Christiana Lebow's White Ale was poison? Hasn't it been known and famous in this town, before ever a Martin came to trouble us? And hasn't it times and again steadied my own inside when it rebelled against their attorney's tricks? Well now, I tell you, I gave three fingers of it to Lord William yesterday when he called in the way of

politeness on his road to church: and sorry I am for the young man; and wouldn't ha' done it if I guessed he'd been taking coffee with his breakfast. For White Ale and coffee is like Bottrells and Martins: they weren't made to mix. And another three fingers I doled out to the old Squire, and more by token 'twas the first time he'd ever darkened my threshold. That's my story: 'tis truth from a truth-speaking woman. And now if any silly fellow is going to vote Whig because o' yesterday, all I can say is—let him drink a breakfast cup of coffee and come to me for a glass of the other stuff; and if in forty minutes' time

[Continued on page 46.]



"It's long since I've had such an enjoyable day."



"SHUT YOUR EYES AND OPEN YOUR MOUTH."

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"Fair View, 84, Genesta Road, Plumstead, Jan. 29, 1889.

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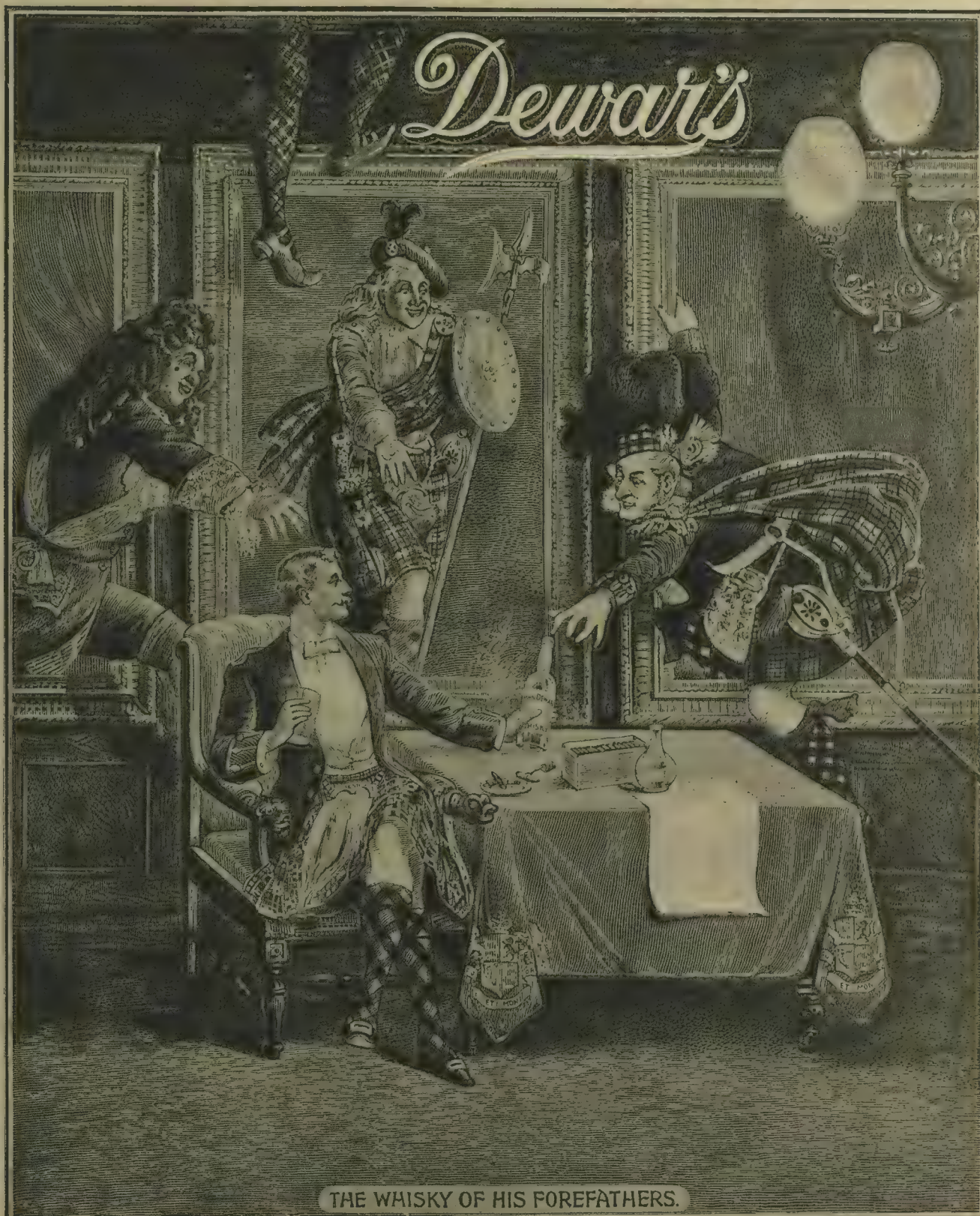
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"The tide cut 'em off."

"THE MAZED ELECTION."—BY "Q."

(SEE PAGE 46.)

WILLIAMS' SHAVING SOAP



FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

WHAT PRES. REEDY SAYS:

"The Master Barbers' Association of the State of New York was organized with the specific object in view of promoting the interests of the Barbers in this State, and for the PROTECTION, SAFETY and WELFARE of the public in general. We certainly cannot do the above, unless we use in our business the BEST material and supplies obtainable, among which I certainly class Williams' Shaving Soap. After an experience in this business covering a period of twenty-two years, I can honestly say, that Williams' is the best shaving soap. To all barbers, who believe in the PROTECTION and SAFETY of the public in general, I would say, use none but Williams' Shaving Soap."

GEO. E. REEDY,

Moral: President Master Barbers' Association, State of New York.

Hair-dressers who consider the safety and welfare of their patrons, use Williams' Shaving Soap.

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TO THOSE NOT SO BORN WE OFFER ONE FREE.

Read on to the End!

The Proprietors of the world-famed "Provost" Oats have for some time felt a desire to present their customers with a SPOON which, like their Porringer, would add to the enjoyment of a dish of porridge prepared from their unrivalled cereals.

It has demanded much thought and skill on the part of the experts specially engaged to produce the exact article required, but a SPOON, satisfactory in all respects, has now been finally decided upon, which, without a doubt, will be much treasured by all who are fortunate enough to secure one.

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IS HEAVILY

SILVER-PLATED THROUGHOUT

and the stem or handle has a beautiful original design in bas-relief most artistically engraved. Indeed, both the quality of the metal and the style of workmanship are of the highest possible character and excellence, and a notable specimen of the silver-smith's art.

This SPOON will not tarnish, and even in constant use will wear for years.

The size and shape of the SPOON are all the most fastidious could wish for, and there is No Name or Advertisement of any kind upon it.

YOU MAY GET ONE POST FREE, either

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It is JUST THE SPOON

for Porridge, and its size, depth, shape, and high quality make it quite a handy spoon for a variety of purposes.

It is a Charming Present

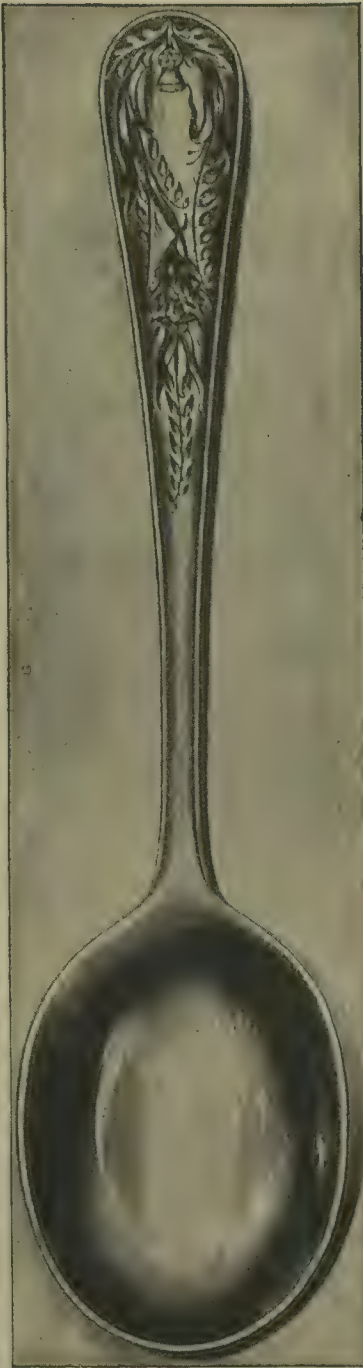
and consumers of Porridge would do well to Save the Coupons and delight their young friends and children with a "GIFT SPOON" as a Christmas Present.

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MARTELL'S THREE STAR BRANDY.



he's got any particular concern about Church matters, you may call me a—a—Martin!"

"That's all very well, Ma'am," put in John à Hall, as soon as he could make himself heard for the laughing. "But it don't account for the Major."

"'Twasn't meant to, my son," snapped Kitty, by this time in high good humour over her success as a public speaker. "But you started to talk about poison, so I thought I'd correct 'ee before you made a second goose of yourself over kidnapping."

But just at this moment a couple of men came running and shouting from the far end of the street.

"We've found 'em! We've found 'em!"

"Where is he to?" and "I told you so!" cried John à Hall and Kitty both in one breath.

"He's over 'pon the Island, making love to Mrs. Lebow's youngest daughter, Lally! The tide's cut 'em off; but Arch'laus Trebilcock's put off to fetch 'em home in his new boat!"

I've heard tell that Kitty took it steady as a regiment. It must have been a dreadful moment for her, the laughter turning on a sudden against her. But she stood for a while, and then to the surprise of everyone, she lifted her head and smiled with the best. Then she caught old Polsue's eye, who was watching her as only a parson can, and like a woman, she fixed on him as the man to answer.

"I reckon I can trust a daughter o' mine," says she.

It must have been nervous work for her, though, as they brought the pair along the street: and poor Lally didn't help her much by looking a picture of shame. But the Major stepped along gaily and up to the platform; and I'll warrant a tier of guns there couldn't have tried a man's courage worse.

"I humbly beg your pardon, Madam. The tide cut us off while I was engaged in persuading your daughter to accept my hand. I cannot tell you"—here he let fly a lover's glance at Lally—"if the delay helped me. But she has accepted me, Ma'am, and with your leave we shall be the happiest couple in England."

They do say that Mrs. Lebow's hand went up to box the poor girl's ears. But the Bottrells had wits as well as breed, one and all: and it ended by her giving the Major two fingers and dropping him one of those curtseys that I've described to you already.

Ay, and the cream of the fun was that, what with her public speaking for one party and giving her daughter to the other, the doubtful voters couldn't for the life of them tell how to please her. "I'll vote, if you please, for Mrs. Lebow," said more than one of them, "if you'll tell me which side she's for." And I suppose that gave Newte his chance. At any rate, he returned Lord William and Major Dyngwall as polling 85 and 127 against Doctor Macann 42 and Mr. Saule 36. And so Miss Lally became a Member of Parliament's wife and rode in her coach.

"Indeed, and I'm sorry for Macann," said Kitty that night, as she untied her bonnet-strings: "but taking one thing with another, it's long since I've had such an enjoyable day."

THE END.

A Laxative and Refreshing Fruit Lozenge,
most agreeable to take.

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Hæmorrhoids,
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BEWARE OF SPURIOUS
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 REMOVES RUST AND TARNISH.
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HORATIO SPARKINS ("Sketches by Boz")	Fred Barnard	11 by 17	30 by 20	—	—	1 1 0	10 6
TALLY HO!	T. C. Garland	13 by 18	22 by 30	1 11 6	200	1 1 0	10 6
A-HUNTING WE WILL GO	T. C. Garland	12½ by 17	22 by 30	1 11 6	200	1 1 0	10 6
FISHING FOR JACK	D. Downing	14 by 16¾	22 by 30	1 11 6	200	1 1 0	10 6
DANGER	D. Downing	17 by 11½	30 by 20	1 11 6	200	1 1 0	10 6
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H.M. KING EDWARD VII. AS COLONEL-IN-CHIEF OF 10TH HUSSARS	H. W. Koekkoek	12½ by 17	24 by 35	2 2 0	200	1 11 6	1 1 0
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H.M. QUEEN ALEXANDRA	S. Begg	13 by 21	32 by 22	1 1 0	200	—	10 6
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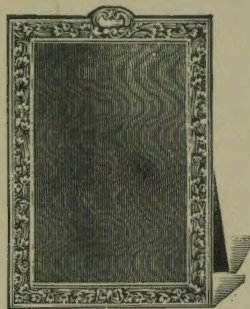
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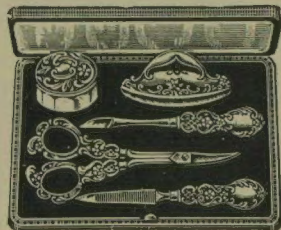
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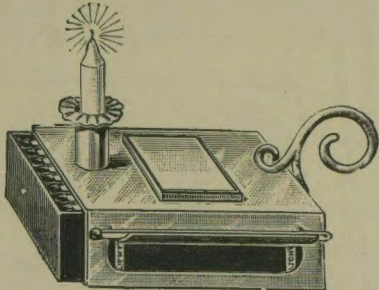
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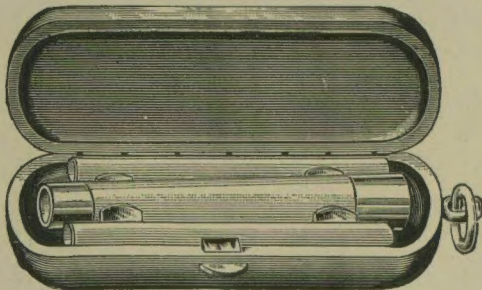
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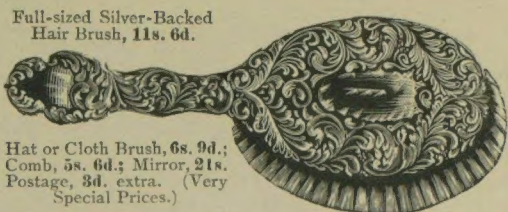
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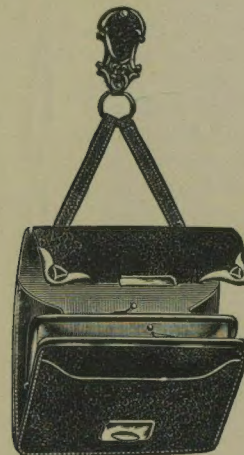
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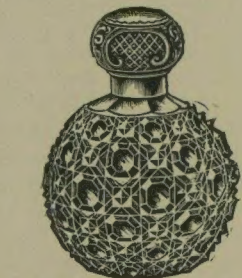
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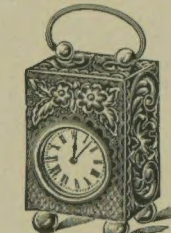


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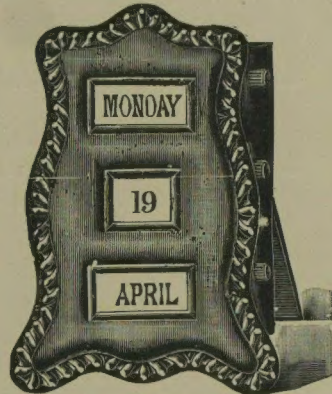


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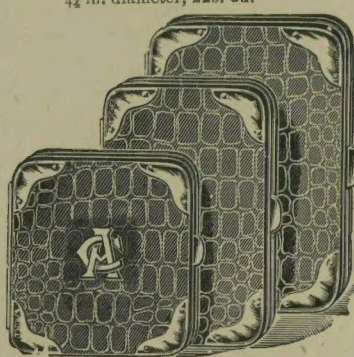
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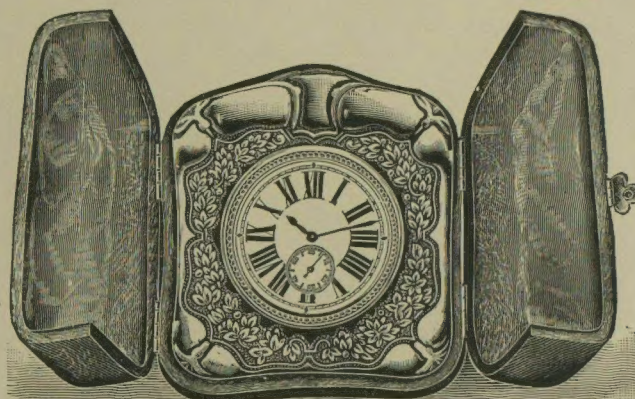
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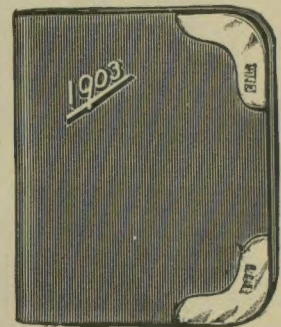
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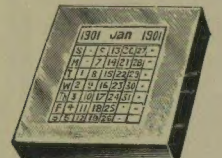
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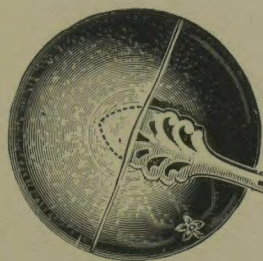
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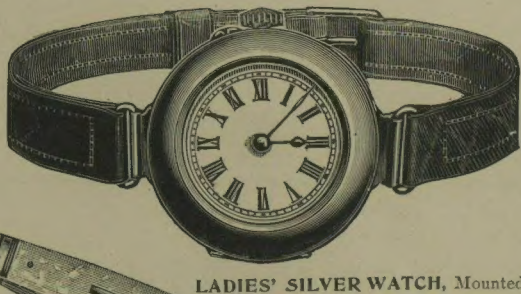
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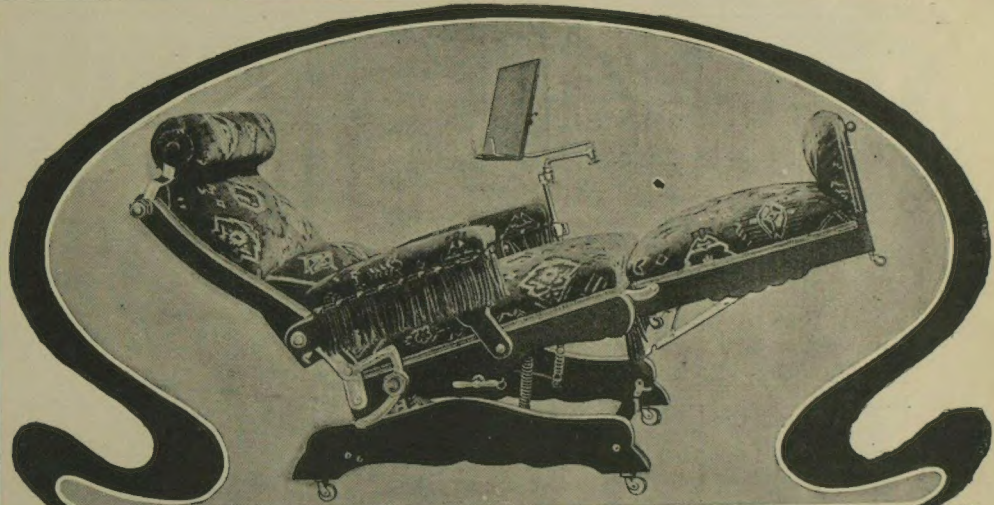


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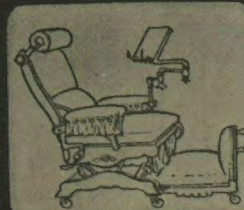
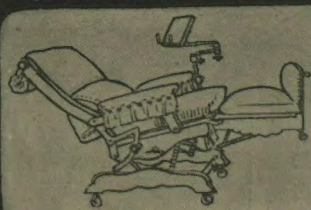
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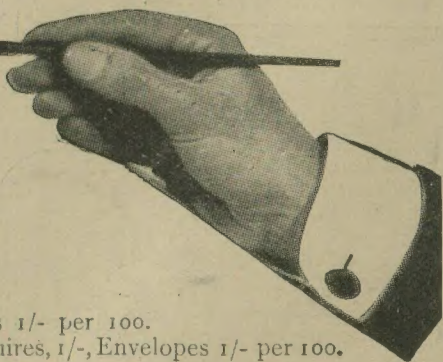
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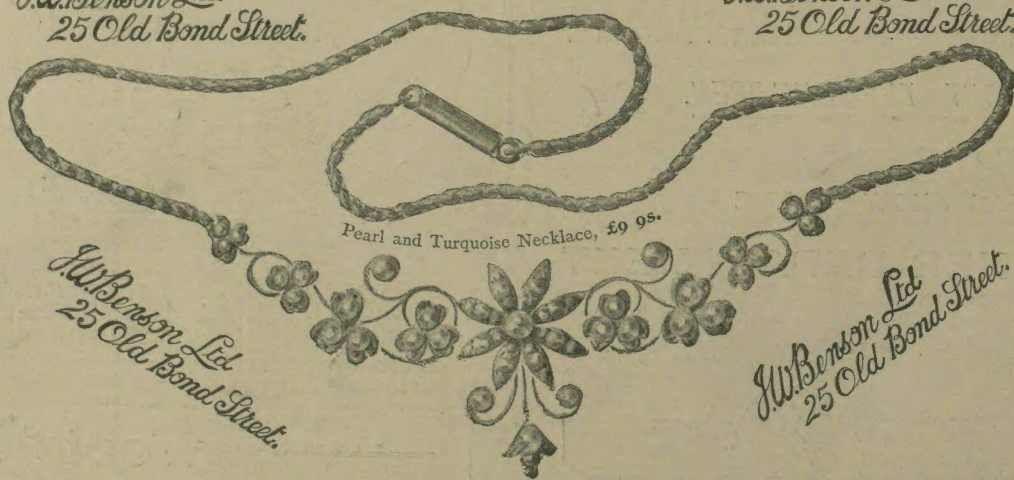
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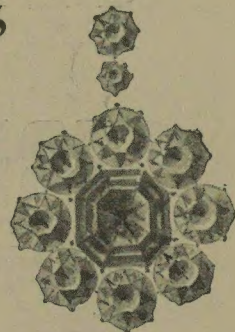


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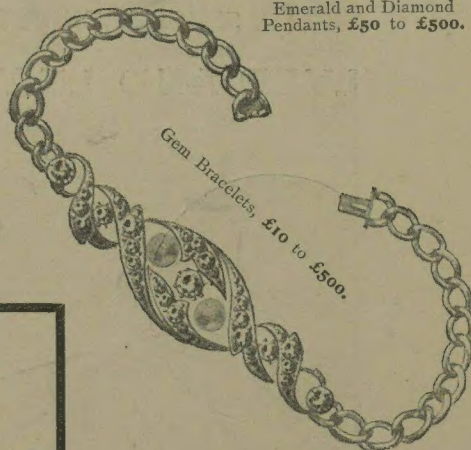
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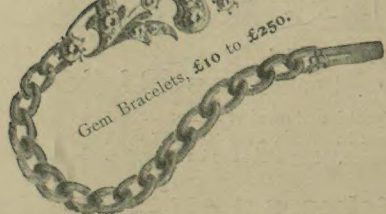
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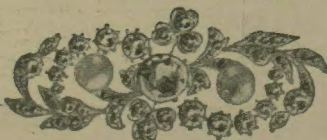
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